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**Alliance durability and intra-alliance security dilemma: a case study of the U.S.-  
Japan alliance in the light of rising China**

MA thesis

Supervisor: Eoin M. McNamara

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I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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# **Alliance durability and intra-alliance security dilemma: a case study of the U.S.-Japan alliance in the light of rising China**

Oksana Pachomcik

## **Abstract**

In recent years, the East-Asian security order has been witnessing a number of disturbances stemming from increased assertiveness of regional security actors, such as North Korea and, to a lesser extent, China. More specifically, the escalation of tensions between China and Japan over the disputed Senkaku/Diaoyu islands has called into question the very viability of the U.S. “hub and spoke” alliance system in the region, with the 60 year old U.S.-Japan alliance at its core. As a relic of bipolar Cold War great power competition, today the alliance faces increasingly complex and uncertain security environment, which effectively challenges the very foundations of the widely celebrated trustworthiness and durability of the security ties between the two nations. Against this background, the thesis conducts a thorough examination of a salient episode, which has occurred and subsequently disturbed the established modes of operation within the U.S.-Japan alliance. In particular, the overarching aim of the study is: a) to uncover and assess the effect exerted by the intensification of an external threat (China) on the severity of intra-alliance security dilemma, with an eroding balance in entrapment-abandonment fears among the allies; b) how this phenomenon have manifested itself throughout the course of the Senkaku contingency; and c) what the identified anxiety-driven processes hold for the enduring quality of the U.S.-Japanese security cooperation. Grounded in theoretical expectations largely derived from the realist school of thought, the paper concludes that, chiefly consistent with realist thinking, the Senkaku crisis and the respective behaviour of allies does point to: 1) the upsurge of intra-alliance security dilemma; 2) the importance of fluctuations in triangular Sino-American-Japanese relationship for the magnitude of abandonment anxiety experienced by the weakest pole in the triangle (Japan); 3) the mitigating role of institutionalization

on alliance ties plagued by twin abandonment-entrapment anxieties. Yet, the paper also discovers, contrary to Morrow's (1991) expectations, the preservation of asymmetrical nature of the alliance, as reflected in high degrees of weaker ally's direct dependence, in all likelihood, would be detrimental to alliance durability, due to the importance attached to acquired reputations for reliability in the minds of state leaders. Hence, it becomes evident that phenomena such as sustained alliance durability and intensity of intra-alliance security dilemma cannot be fully captured by one all-encompassing realist approach; instead, any future inquiries into the topic of alliance durability would significantly benefit from a harmonious merging of insights from different schools of thought.

**Keywords:** the U.S.-Japan alliance, rising China, balance-of-threat, alliance durability, strategic triangle, intra-alliance security dilemma, abandonment, entrapment, reputation for reliability, asymmetry

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## **Introduction**

Throughout the course of its existence, the U.S.-Japan alliance has established a firm reputation for “anchoring stability in Asia” via a broader network of the U.S. “hub and spoke” alliance system (CSIS, 2012). Yet, recent developments in the increasingly complex and interdependent region present the alliance with a myriad of challenges, at the core of which is ensuring its own survival and enduring role in East-Asian security architecture. One of those threatening conditions is constituted by the “emerging contours of China’s foreign policy” in the form of “peaceful rise 2.0” (Zhang, 2015). The peacefulness of this rise comes across as a rather odd self-proclaimed characteristic, given China’s increased assertiveness in the South and East China Seas, coupled with deliberate exploitation of international disagreements on how to deal with “gray zone” coercion and disregard for the provisions of international law, ruled by Hague tribunal as applicable in the South China Sea disputes (Foreign Policy, 2016). However, it remains unclear how exactly such actions translate into posing a threat to the U.S.- Japan alliance durability. After all, it is intuitively tempting to assume that increased assertiveness of an external security actor, directed against one of the allies, would inevitably result in the strengthening of the alliance solidarity and cohesion. In the context of pressing reality of security and power competition, however, the existence and increasing magnitude of an external threat does not directly translate into an undeniably strengthened alliance endurance potential. Hence, the question arises: can the intermediate process, characterized by dynamics of security dilemma of interpretation and response, offer more accurate explanations for alliance members’ behaviour and how this behaviour translates into the increases or decreases in the alliance prospects for prolonged durability? What effect, if any, the differing level of engagement with the perceived treat on the part of the allies exert on the operation of intra-alliance security dilemma, with mistrust-driven abandonment and entrapment fears at its core? If it causes indecision and hesitation, how does this affect the choice of future trajectory by partially abandoned ally?

Building on the extensive observations stemming from the realist school of thought, coupled with insights of scholars of security dilemma and reputation-based

studies, transcending the traditional self-imposed boundaries of scientific inquiry (realism-constructivism-liberal institutionalism triad), this thesis examines the elements correspondingly cementing and eroding the U.S.-Japan durability, and how the rise of China, as a threat or a strategic anchor underlying the rationale for the alliance's protracted existence, influences the respective severity or malleability of these conditions.

### **Thesis structure**

The thesis proceeds on the basis of five interrelated sections. First, the theoretical framework for case study examination is set out, whereby: a) an effective definition of an alliance is established, distinguishing alliances from alignments and differing characteristics carried by the latter; b) balance-of-power and balance-of-threat theories are consulted in an attempt to single out potential indicators, which point to the likelihood of alliance formation, endurance and dissolution; c) the importance of past behaviour and reputation for reliability is being derived from formative-events model and complemented by reliability elements found in broader security dilemma theory; d) the indicators, in the form of abandonment and entrapment fears, pointing towards disruption in alliance cohesion are illustrated, in the context of intra-alliance security dilemma theory; e) the strategic triangle theory is considered as a useful tool in assessing why there might be a gap in alliance members' perceptions, accompanying anxieties and preferred responses towards the rise of assertive activities from one pole. The theoretical part is followed by a section justifying the chosen methodological approach for answering the pre-determined research questions, outlining the positive and negative traits of the single case research design as a basis for empirical investigation. The subsequent two chapters present the empirical investigation of the phenomenon in question, broken into smaller subsections to ensure logical sequence of events and their interpretation through the lenses of the discussed theoretical approaches. The final chapter ties theory and case study together, while also suggesting future avenues for the conduct of similar research.



## **Chapter I. Theoretical framework and conceptualization**

### **Alliances: definition and theoretical underpinnings**

The primary task of any scientific inquiry is to offer a definition of a subject under investigation (Snyder, 1990: 104), despite Paul Schroeder (1976: 255) insistence on the idea that “categorizing alliances according to their types...[is] not likely to be very helpful in describing what alliances really do”. Nevertheless, the substantial part of the literature on alliances stems from the realist school of thought, most notably, the writings of Stephen Walt, who offers a rather broad working definition for an alliance - “a formal or informal commitment for security cooperation between two or more states” (1987:157). Alliances differ substantially in their nature (*offensive-defensive*), capabilities and prescribed obligations (*symmetrical-asymmetrical*), levels of institutionalization and functions emanating from those (*ibid.*). Yet, there is an important distinction to be drawn here, one between alliances and alignments, which Walt (1985, 1987) does not outline clearly in his papers. A rather narrower definition is offered by Glen Snyder, suggesting that alliances “are formal associations of states for the use (or non-use) of military force, in specified circumstances, against states outside their own membership” (Snyder 1997: 4). With regards to alignment-alliance spectrum, Snyder (1990:109) offers three distinguishing features of a genuine sustainable alliance: “precision, obligation and reciprocity”, whereas expectations underlying alignments tend to be inherently vague and uncertain, with “verbal statements” acting as a reassuring strategy for specific circumstances.

Perhaps more importantly, taking into account that the alliance under examination (U.S.-Japan) is bilateral in its nature, one should consider broad distinctive features of such an alliance. For instance, Ikenberry and Inoguchi (2003) insist that U.S.-Japan alliance has developed beyond a bilateral military pact, towards a “political partnership”, whose endurance rests on the successful evolution of an effective institutional mechanism. In a more general sense, Rafferty (2003) states that bilateral alliances are often characterized by the informal nature of liaison between the parties, which takes the form of expectations rather than obligations, the resulting lack of formal

supervisory bodies and, hence, greater degree of flexibility. Notably, the author does not link low degrees of institutionalization with relative weakness of an alliance as a whole.

### **Balance of power<sup>1</sup> and balance of threat**

Since, in broad terms, one can view alliance durability through the lens of prevalent modes of alliance behavior in the face of shifts in international system, it is also worthwhile to consider insights offered by Kenneth Waltz's (1979). Waltz, in line with balance-of-power theory, suggests that, in practice, alliances tend to follow the path of "*balancing*"<sup>2</sup> and "*bandwagoning*"<sup>3</sup>, which carry certain implications on the likelihood of alliance collapse (Waltz, 1979). Additional modes of alliance behaviour - "*buck-passing*" (*loosening alliance commitments*) and "*chain-ganging*" (*tightening alliance commitments*) (Waltz, 1979) – are of particular relevance here. In the context of U.S.-Japan alliance, Lind (2004, 2016) suggests that the former constitutes "the foundation of Japan's national security strategy", which is centered not around pacifist attitudes, but rather a conscious strategy of "buck-passing", whereby Japanese allies are obligated to pay the "cost of balancing security in East Asia". Needless to say this strategy of deliberate restraint is bound to result in frustrations and anxieties within the alliance, what ultimately endangers its vitality and sets the stage for its gradual dissolution.

This implicitly points to alliance durability and vitality being inextricably linked to the existing *balance of threat* (Walt, 1987), given that the rationale or meaning of an alliance relies heavily on the existence of "the adversary threat to which they are a response" (Snyder, 1997: 192). Strachan-Morris (2010) refers to a threat as "a function of the enemy's capability and intent to conduct attacks... 'threat' = capability x intent". Lowell Dittmer (2014: 2), drawing on Walt's (2009) observations on alliance behaviour in a unipolar international setting, notes that facing a threat, the concerned

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, the fact that Japan chose to form and maintain the alliance with the US, which is considered as a stronger state, somewhat contradicts Waltz's balance-of-power theoretical predictions that the anarchic structure of the international arena coerces states to join the weaker side. Here, Walt's balance-of-threat carries more of an explanatory value, in suggesting that states align with the less threatening side, as illustrated by experience of Eastern Europe (Snyder, 1990).

<sup>2</sup> Occurs when a stronger state joins a weaker one.

<sup>3</sup> Occurs when a weaker one joins the stronger one.

state possesses two options: a) appeasing or forming alliance ties “with the source of the threat (“bandwagoning”)” b) resisting the threat through: increases in self-strengthening and self-reliance (internal balancing), or by forming or upgrading the existing alliance ties with another country “with common interest in resisting the source of threat” as a way of “external balancing”. More specifically, Walt (1987), maintaining that formation, endurance and dissolution of alliances is a reaction to changes in external threats<sup>4</sup>, presents several cues that point to a process of deterioration within the alliance.

The following observations, even if largely theoretical in their nature and rather scarcely supported by empirical evidence, constitute a departure point for this thesis’ theoretical background, especially given that Walt couples alliance formation, endurance and even gradual dissolution not with the predominant global balance of power (Waltz, 1979), but rather the rise and demise of external threats. Walt’s (1987: 159) pre-conditions for alliance deterioration are:

i. Accumulation of strength by one ally, implying that the state is seeking to eliminate dependence and necessity to rely on other countries for its own security. Here, increasing growth in defense budgets along with broader efforts at extensive militarization by a (weaker) ally would signify that alliance glue or rationale is fading, and the entire security liaison is about to be terminated. Yet, this inference is incomplete, as it fails to acknowledge the importance of burden-sharing for allied solidarity building and alliance desirability, more generally.

ii. Shifting “magnitude or identity of the main threat” (Walt, 1987). While it is tempting to assume that the shift towards a more aggressive stance by the adversary would inevitably trigger the strengthening of the alliance, one still has to keep in mind vested interests and differing threat perceptions, which, instead of confrontation, might lead to accommodation and engagement strategies. Moreover, the differences in perceptions might lead to miscommunication and deadlock within the particular

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<sup>4</sup> This implies that the differences in reaction to external threats is pre-determined by existing divergences in threat (mis)perceptions (Jervis, 1976).

alliance, inviting mutual suspicion and unwillingness to get entangled in conflicts over an unreliable ally.

iii. Change in domestic political configurations, and the effect it exerts on preferred security trajectories. Here, the implication is that a more nationalistic party might resort to isolationism and increasing autonomous strike capabilities, not necessarily in the form of a strategy for equalizing burden-sharing.

Walt (1987) complements these with endurance ensuring factors, or elements that will keep the alliance together despite any major power and threat transitions in the region:

i. Preserved credibility/reputation for reliability or states assessing its ally's recent behavior. This will be discussed in a more detailed manner in the context of security dilemma.

ii. High levels of institutionalization (Walt, 1987: 166): "the greater the level of institutionalization within an alliance, the more likely it is to endure despite an extensive change in the array of external threats". In this paper, institutionalization is treated on a par with efforts at formalization, as represented by the revision of the official Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Cooperation. Ruggie's (1998) definition stands as most applicable to intra-alliance behavior, he links routine communication, routine organizational interactions and mutually intelligible behaviour as primary determinants of the degree to which particular ties are institutionalized. Whereas, Smith (1999) draws an explicit causal relationship between institutionalized ties and probability of enduring cooperation.

iii. Prevalence and preservation of asymmetry in power within the alliance, which allows the relationship to thrive by making the alliance "easier to adapt to new conditions and...better equipped to handle the conflicts of interest that inevitably arise" (Walt, 1987: 170). Interestingly, an empirical study conducted by Mahan (1977) disproves such theoretical expectation by concluding, through a careful examination of British naval ties, that for cooperation between allies to endure, there has to exist a sustained equality in obligations and capabilities of the partners.

### **Formative-events model and importance of mistrust**

Even though realism is the leading school of thought when it comes to the generation of explanations of alliance patterns and behaviour, it is important not to neglect one no less influential approach based on formative-events model of learning, as presented by Reiter (1994). In its very essence, Reiter's findings show, contrary to balance-of-threat theory, that states' decisions regarding alliances are not responses to the level of international threat, but rather a result of an attempt to avoid past mistakes and repeat past successes. In Reiter's own words, "success promotes continuity and failure stimulates innovation", hence the critical, salient events in alliance history would serve as a test for both allies (1994:526). However, this paper will rely on Reiter's contentions only partially, and in the context of reputation costs and credibility of commitments achieved through handling of a salient issue, namely, the Senkaku island dispute. It should be noted, however, that Reiter's theory is applicable largely to alliances among minor powers, although there is nothing to suggest that it would not generate any reliable or interesting knowledge if applied to the alliances formed between two major powers, especially if the applicability of both Waltz's balance of power and Walt's balance-of-threat theory proves to be limited and their explanatory power insufficient. Moreover, Reiter's approach can be complemented by adding an explicit dimension of an external threat and how it, deliberately or not, meddles with the alliance cohesion.

Furthermore, it becomes evident that while structural realists do acknowledge the damaging effects of mistrust in state relations, which serve as a trigger for fear driven security dilemmas, the role of trust between allies (rather than adversaries) remains somewhat obscured. More specifically, even though Walt (1987) does refer to credibility as one of the key conditions for forming and maintaining effective alliances, there is no explicit mentioning of the role that mutual trust plays in alliance dynamics. Kydd (2001) further develops the concept of trust between states, in the context of reassurance strategies. In short, Kydd (2001:326) holds that trust stands for "a belief that the other side is likely to be trustworthy and will therefore want to reciprocate cooperation rather than exploit it", whereas costly signals serve as a way to distinguish between trustworthy and untrustworthy types. However, assuming that states which

have already formed alliance ties perceived each other as trustworthy enough, the question arises: what developments within the alliance might serve as a signal of fading trust?

### **Security dilemma and security paradox**

Largely derived from the defensive structural realist school of thought, the concept of security dilemma, with the inevitable condition of uncertainty at its core, appears to carry certain explanatory value when it comes to assessing security ties forged between states. Building on the pioneer scholars in the realm of security dilemma, John Herz and Herbert Butterfield<sup>5</sup>, Ken Booth and Nicolas J. Wheeler present their own definition in an attempt to capture “the complex interrelationship of both psychological [applicable to the first level] and material dimensions”:

*“The security dilemma is a **two-level strategic predicament** in relations between states and other actors, with each level consisting of two related lemmas <...> which force decision-makers to choose between them. The first and basic level consists of a **dilemma of interpretation** about the motives, intentions and capabilities of others; the second and derivative level consists of a **dilemma of response** about the most rational way of responding. <...>When leaders resolve their dilemma of response in a manner that creates a spiral of mutual hostility, when neither wanted it, a situation has developed which we call **the security paradox**”* [emphasis in original text] (2008: 4-5).

It is important to note, that even though this conceptualization is deliberately broad in a sense that it effectively incorporates non-state actors, this paper, nonetheless, maintains the original emphasis on the states as primary actors or ultimate decision-makers in the context of the operation and dynamics of security dilemma. In fact,

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<sup>5</sup> The rather early versions of security dilemma conceptualisation presented by Herz and Butterfield (separately) is deemed too broad, rather fatalistic and, in Butterfield’s case, overly infused with philosophy (invoking the idea of “Hobbesian fear” and “man’s universal sin” (in Booth and Wheeler, 2008: 30, Butterfield 1951: 22), for the purposes of this paper.

Thomas J. Christensen argues that the traditional, state-centric, concept of security dilemma is highly applicable to East Asian security order, characterized by “security interdependence<...>normally patterned into regionally based clusters: security complexes” resembling the structure of “the balance-of-power Europe of the nineteenth century”<sup>6</sup> (Buzan, 2003: 149), and the resulting ‘knottiness’ “that increases the difficulty of balancing simultaneous threats and assurances” (Christensen, 2002: 7).

This is not to imply that any occurring security dilemma in the region carries “unpleasant choices” and pre-determined grim outcomes, even though the centrality and inevitability of negative alternatives has become somewhat a form of “habits of thought”, predominant among “theorists and practitioners of International Relations” (Booth and Wheeler, 2008: 6). Herz (1950:235) himself, in a rather gloomy manner, asks: “how could [one] trust in the continuance of good intentions...with leaders and policies forever changing?” However, despite “the existential condition of unresolvable uncertainty”<sup>7</sup> continuously generating fear and mistrust (Booth and Wheeler, 1992:30), the existing and developing security paradoxes mentioned above can be resolved with the introduction of a “key attitudinal variable” – *security dilemma sensibility*<sup>8</sup>, or “responsiveness towards” and awareness about the “complexity of the military intentions”, and how one’s actions might trigger fear in others (Booth and Wheeler, 2008: 7). From this, it becomes evident that for the security dilemma to be genuine, actors must be benign security seekers; or as Kydd (1997:153) puts it, “sheep in sheep’s clothing” on their quest for security do not end up in conflict “in the absence of genuinely aggressive states”; in Herz’s words, there is no security dilemma when facing a Hitler (1950:234). This is because *status quo* powers are perceived as perfectly capable of adequate signaling of their intentions, especially in the context of alliance commitments between two democracies, where the severity of security dilemma and,

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<sup>6</sup> In this analogy, China is seen as a replica of 19<sup>th</sup> century Germany: “big, centrally located, rapidly increasing in its absolute and relative power, has border problems and historical enmities with several of its neighbours, has an authoritarian government, backs onto Russia, and is in nationalist mood. Many in the region fear rising Chinese military power and assertiveness” (Buzan, 2003: 150).

<sup>7</sup> ‘The problem of other minds’ and uncertainty of knowledge, as illustrated by Wendt (1999:281).

<sup>8</sup> It is important to note, that Butterfield (1951: 15) was highly skeptical of the idea that policy practitioners, as compared to historians, possess the necessary skills and knowledge to exercise security dilemma sensitivity.

more specifically, fears about future preferences of state leaders, are mitigated by relatively stable foreign policy directions (Gaubatz, 1996).

Interestingly, in the world of offensive realism, the necessity to exercise security dilemma sensibility withers away completely, in the light of Mearsheimer's alternative prescriptions of replacing dilemmas of interpretation and response with assuming the worst and accumulating power accordingly, in a strife of becoming "the most powerful state in the system" (2001: 33). From this, it follows that, since the "intentions are ultimately unknowable", and the levels of fear depend on "the changes in the distribution of power", which in turn compel entities to "engage in militarized security competition" and behave in ways that can easily be labeled as "hostile or revisionist" (Mearsheimer, 2001:45, Booth and Wheeler, 2008: 37), security dilemma operates<sup>9</sup> very briefly in the world of offensive realism and "predatory" states (Schweller, 1996). In other words, there is no need for Kydd's costly signaling and reassurance strategies when the last resort is always building up the offensive potential<sup>10</sup> and endorsing the gloomy forecasting of the "worst-case" scenario.

### **Intra-alliance security dilemma<sup>11</sup>**

Translated into intra-alliance dynamics, security dilemma, and increased accumulation of military power more specifically, carries slightly different characteristics. First, it should be noted that the establishment of security cooperation between two or more states already indicates that there is some basic level of trust or sufficient convergence of interests. Yet, as states interact with each other and with the external security actors, trust can end up being eroded, and common interests overshadowed by new security agendas. Second, the security dilemma and security paradox in the context of alliance politics has slightly different nature and less

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<sup>9</sup> Snyder (2002) argues that there cannot be any security dilemmas in the environments occupied by aggressive states; instead, it is the perpetual security competition that takes place.

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, as forming military alliances with other states can be considered as a form of power accumulation, especially if one party to the arrangement is a great power, it can be argued that certain alliances trigger security dilemma, but with regards to the state against which the alliance is perceived (either by the state itself, or by allies) to be formed. This invites a crucial question, do alliances serve their ultimate purpose of increasing security, or is the formation and strengthening of alliance ties in the face of a newly emerging threat is based on a self-defeating logic.

<sup>11</sup> Snyder (1984, 1990) also refers to it as a trade-off.



calamitous consequences than the dilemma occurring between two states without established security liaisons. In a sense, it is less severe, given the relative predictability of intentions and the resulting ability to exercise security dilemma sensitivity. Snyder (1984, 1990) presents perhaps the most convincing account of the ways in which security dilemma, along with the trust issues underlying it, is likely to affect the enduring quality of a particular alliance.

As in the original security dilemma operating under the rules of anarchic international arena, intra-alliance security dilemma can too be characterized by uncertainty in ally's intentions, especially when one party is rapidly accumulating power in three following ways: "armament, territorial aggrandizement and alliance formation" (Snyder, 1984: 461). For analytical purposes, Snyder breaks down intra-alliance security dilemma into two categories: primary and secondary (1984: 462). With regards to the primary security dilemma, the scholar suggests that in a multi-polar world, such as pre-1945, if each state is equally strong, the prevailing tendency will be to abstain from forming an alliance and, in doing so, avoid the costly commitments such arrangements usually entail (*ibid.*). However, there are two instances where alliances are going to form nevertheless: a) when moderate security is not satisfactory and the building of alliance ties is likely to enhance it; b) when one party fears to find itself in isolation, in case the other party does not abstain from establishing an alliance with other interested parties (Snyder, 1984: 462). It is worth noting that especially the latter fear-induced logic might serve as an explanatory factor in any assessment of why certain alliances endure.

### **Abandonment**

For Snyder, the two major "bads" embedded in the dynamics of alliance security dilemma are: abandonment and entrapment by an ally (1984: 466, *first developed by Michael Mandelbaum*<sup>12</sup>). Even more so, in a multi-polar world, he asserts, there is considerably less firmness in alliance commitments and less importance attached to the written text (*ibid.*). This inherently means that abandonment, or *defection*, does not exclusively stand for an ally withdrawing

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<sup>12</sup> Mandelblau, M. (1981) *The Nuclear Revolution: International Politics Before and After Hiroshima*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

troops or physically retreating in times of crisis. Instead, it can take shape of an ally realigning “with the opponent; he may merely de-align, abrogating the alliance contract; he may fail to make good on his explicit commitments; or he may fail to provide support in contingencies where support is expected” (Snyder, 1984: 466). Importantly, neither of the last two occurrences would necessarily lead to the immediate dissolution of the alliance, yet the weakening would take place with regards to the “expectations of support which underlie it”, leading to suspicion and potential preemptive realignment (Snyder, 1984:466-7). For instance, in the context of Europe, the perpetual fear existed that U.S. will sooner or later either “relapse into isolationism or [end up] establishing a “condominium” with the Soviet Union” (Snyder, 1990: 119). The swings in abandonment-entrapment balance naturally followed suit.

Intuitively speaking, another alternative course of action triggered by rather extreme fears of abandonment is developing autonomous strike capabilities. Here, Snyder (1990: 112-3, 116) contends that, as “the principal common interest in any alliance is holding it together, [and] the principal source of conflict is the stance to be taken toward the adversary”, one should be wary of dire consequences of the “adversary game” running in parallel to allied interactions, whereby “when adversaries compromise their disputes in order to reduce tension, the solidarity of their alliances is weakened, and when allies tighten their bonds, tension with their adversaries rises”. In other words, engaging the adversary by one ally implies that there is a threat perception gap (Jervis, 1976) within the alliance, which in turn fuels the abandonment-entrapment anxieties within the security arrangement. Yet, the question remains, how the fears of abandonment and potential strive for autonomous strike capability translate into a threat to alliance cohesion and long-term endurance.

James D. Morrow’s statistical examination of 164 military alliances (1816-1965) presents “the autonomy-security trade-off model”, which posits that “regardless of the type of alliance, the greater the change in its members’ individual capabilities, the more likely it will be broken”, meaning that the shift towards more symmetry in terms of allies’ commitments and contributions lowers the overall “valuation” of the alliance as a guarantor of one’s security (1991: 904, 907). However, while the increase in the pace of militarization by one ally intuitively leads to an assumption that the tensions

with the main threat are on the rise, this somewhat overlooks the internal alliance mechanism of attaching labels. This means that the development of autonomous capabilities might as well be treated as a reassurance signal and an attempt to get rid of a “free-rider” label<sup>13</sup> by engaging in a more equal burden-sharing (Olson and Zeckhauser, 1966: 273). Such situations carry a significant potential to create an alliance-specific paradox<sup>14</sup>, where equalization in burden-sharing by accumulation of more defense capabilities eradicates the necessity or rationale for the alliance itself, because the ally no longer has to rely on others for its security. Here, the issue of (unequal) dependence and what implications it has for alliance behavior and sustainability surfaces.

### ***Direct and Indirect Dependence***

In a similar fashion to Morrow’s (1991) premise about detrimental effects of reductions in asymmetry, Snyder (1984: 471) highlights the importance of diverging levels of dependence<sup>15</sup>, but placing it more explicitly in the context of the twin anxieties of intra-alliance security dilemma: abandonment and entrapment. He breaks down the concept of *direct dependence* into four elements<sup>16</sup> (1984: 472):

- i. “a state's need for assistance in war as a function of the extent to which its military capability falls short of its potential adversary's capability;
- ii. its partner's capacity to supply the assistance (the greater the partner's strength, the more one is dependent on him, up to the point where the combined strength provides sufficient security);

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<sup>13</sup> Waltz (cited in Snyder 1990: 121) terms this phenomenon as “freedom of irresponsible”, highly applicable in the European context, in which the US is the credible provider of Europe’s “ultimate protection, [while the Europeans] are to indulge their own preferences or make ego-bolstering “Euro-gestures”.

<sup>14</sup> Admittedly, the issue of intra-alliance paradoxes stands as a largely unexplored area in alliance literature.

<sup>15</sup> The exact formulation by Snyder (1984): “the more dependent a state is, and/or the less dependent the ally appears to be, the more likely it is that the costs and risks of abandonment will outweigh the costs and risks of entrapment“

<sup>16</sup> What this conceptualization clearly overlooks, however, is the importance of domestic political configurations, and the value placed in the alliance and its perceived necessity by the general public. In the context of the US-Japan alliance, the issue of Okinawa has been the continuous source of strains and tensions.

iii. the state's degree of conflict and tension with the adversary (the greater the conflict and tension, the more likely one will have to call on the partner for help); and

iv. the state's realignment alternatives (the more numerous the alternatives, and the more satisfactory they are, the less the dependence on the present partner)".

On the top of this, Snyder (1984: 473) suggests that strategic interests of the allies form the basis of "indirect dependence", affecting "the partners' relative fears of abandonment". In the realm of indirect dependence, Snyder observes slightly different patterns of alliance security dilemma, hypothesizing that while "the stronger ally will be less directly dependent than its partner but more indirectly dependent", leaving the stronger state with "less leverage" (1984: 473). This distinctive asymmetry is attributable to "geographical factors and disparity of power"<sup>17</sup> (ibid.) Yet, in the context of both, direct and indirect, dependence, Snyder (1984: 477) contends that past behavior of the ally enters state's calculation of chances of being abandoned in the case of crisis. On the top of that, "a formal, explicit contract" stands as a complementary mitigating factor in the abandonment fears with asymmetrical dependence as their cause (Snyder, 1984: 474).

### ***Reputation for (un)reliability<sup>18</sup>***

In a more ambitious and recent attempt, Crescenzi et al (2012:260) ties the perceived "attractiveness" of the alliance partner and the overarching "alliance formation calculus" with accumulated "reputation for reliability", whereby "positive expectation that the alliance will hold in the event of conflict" forms the basis for the alliance sustained existence. While this theory, and reliability as an explanatory factor, is primarily applied to the (potential) inception of new alliances, it also offers some valuable insights into the existing security arrangements and the prospects of their endurance. More specifically, one can draw parallels with how ally's credibility/reliability feeds into the other's fears of entrapment or abandonment.

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<sup>17</sup> Yet again, it is important to acknowledge the role played by domestic politics, shifts in indirect dependence, or so-called strategic interests, might be the result of changes in domestic political configurations and shifting public attitudes.

<sup>18</sup> Used interchangeably with the term credibility throughout this paper.

However, while the study covers a wide range of alliances throughout history, “observing how potential partners have performed in upholding their alliance commitments”, it does not explicitly state what constitutes an ultimate breach of commitment. Here, Andrew O’Neal (2011: 1456), in his study of potential redundancy of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence in East Asia, suggests that there are three basic conditions on which credibility, which underlies stability and relevance of the US presence, rests: a) the U.S.’s willingness to enforce and act upon its obligations; b) the reassured adversary that the U.S. posture is firm in adhering to its alliance commitments, c) the trust and confidence placed in the U.S. ability and readiness to honour and respect their security concerns. On a similar note, McNamara (2016: 14) adds that an observable “breakdown concerning any side of this triad” will push allies to consider alternative routes to ensuring their security and survival.

Importantly, a concept of hesitation, “buying time” or so called “waffling” in the face of imminent crisis (Teraoka, 2015) is not accounted for in this study; instead, it stands as a sort of a “gray area”, which, while not technically constituting a legitimate violation, nevertheless carries a potential to damage credibility of a “waffling” ally. Needless to say, it is a highly challenging task trying to capture hesitation adequately, since it is inherently a non-event. However, in the context of the matters of great urgency, the response time of a credible security-ensuring partner is intuitively expected to be rapid or at the very least accelerated.

On a related note, Gibler’s (2008: 428) study, while not explicitly mentioning the detrimental effect of hesitation<sup>19</sup> on alliance cohesion, does point to the tendency of “enemies to challenge more forcefully and in more situations” due to “consistent backing down”. The conducted investigation entailed a number of hypotheses, but one particularly important (and confirmed) in the context of this paper was “H5: [s]tates are less likely to be targeted by a dispute if they have outside defense pacts with states that have honored their commitments in the past” (Gibler, 2008: 433). In other words, a

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<sup>19</sup> Citing Sartori’s study, Gibler chooses to use the term “bluffing”, which carries a different meaning given that it is a consciously deceptive strategy, while hesitation is more benign and perhaps more justifiable in its very nature.

failure to dissuade the adversary from pursuing confrontational tactics directed against the weaker ally, which was harboring “consistent expectations of cooperation” and the deterrent effect of a defense umbrella provided by the stronger ally, reveals a certain degree of fragility in credible commitments, which in turn leads to fractured alliance ties<sup>20</sup> (Gibler, 2008: 429). Paradoxically enough, Gibler (2008: 450) eventually discovers that not only a failure to commit, but also, any “costly way” of honoring those commitments, is likely to end up in yet another deterrence fiasco. Here, Gibler’s (2008: 450) explanations come across as somewhat speculative in their nature: he claims that, if rivals are sufficiently able to challenge the existing security arrangement and the stronger ally is faced with a necessity to “honor a commitment, [this] suggests a sign of weakness in the partner or in the alliance itself”. While Gibler’s study does shed some light on the enormously delicate nature of the situation the stronger ally might find itself in, by also revealing the operation of a basic intra-alliance security dilemma<sup>21</sup>, it fails to fully appreciate the second element to this dilemma, which carries a potential to explain hesitations and “backing down”, namely the fear of entrapment.

### **Entrapment**

Looking at the abandonment fears caused by distancing through hesitation, the question arises as to what exactly causes this occurrence between formally committed partners. Viewing the issue of “backing down” through the theoretical lens presented by Snyder (1984:468), states resort to keeping the promises "tentative or vague for as long as possible" in order to maximize bargaining leverage and avoid entrapment caused by the over-confidence, which is an outcome of a strategy of strong commitment. However, the “weakening of commitments and withholding support, while acting as a restraining force on a reckless ally, also increases the risks of

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<sup>20</sup> Admittedly, it would be a crude oversimplification to suggest that there is a clearly identifiable causal mechanism here, since most of the elements of this phenomena can hardly be captured by the existing research tools. Yet, the association between these variables remains, if largely intuitive, is partially backed by existing studies (Teraoka, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Yet, Gibler’s “consistent backing down” by a stronger, if treated as a deliberate strategy based on a conscious choice to violate an alliance commitment once the crisis is deemed to be dangerous enough, can be equated with Mearsheimer’s worst-case scenario reasoning applied to the anarchic international stage, meaning that intra-alliance security dilemma exists either very briefly, or does not exist at all in this setting.

abandonment and reduces reputation for loyalty, these stand as pre-requisites for the eventual dissolution of an alliance” (Snyder, 1984: 469). Interestingly, Snyder also identifies a link between the strengthening of the alliance ties and the subsequent behaviour of the key adversary: the solidifying of the alliance leads to increases in the "degree of threat", as perceived by the adversary, whereas weak commitment "reduces this effect" (ibid.). Evidently, this theoretical expectation runs in a slight contradiction to Gibler’s (2008) study. Yet, it would be a crude oversimplification to assume that the intensified threat perception automatically translates into the adoption of an aggressive posture either by an ally or the adversary (see *Table 1* for delineation of potential responses), since the former requires for the gap of threat perception within alliance to be narrow, and the latter has an opportunity to exercise security dilemma sensibility by observing the anxieties within the opposing alliance.

In simple terms, as it has been evidenced, entrapment, stands for being dragged into a conflict over an ally’s interests, which are not necessarily shared, carry similar weight or are valued to a similar degree (Snyder, 1984: 467). For this to occur and not to have a deteriorating effect, as Snyder (1984) contends, one has put significant value into the preservation of the alliance; and that inherently points to a great level of dependence and great willingness to commit as a pre-condition for entrapment fears to materialize without an ally defecting. Needless to say, the anxieties of entrapment usually run on both sides, especially if there are considerable divergences in security postures and strategic trajectories of the countries.

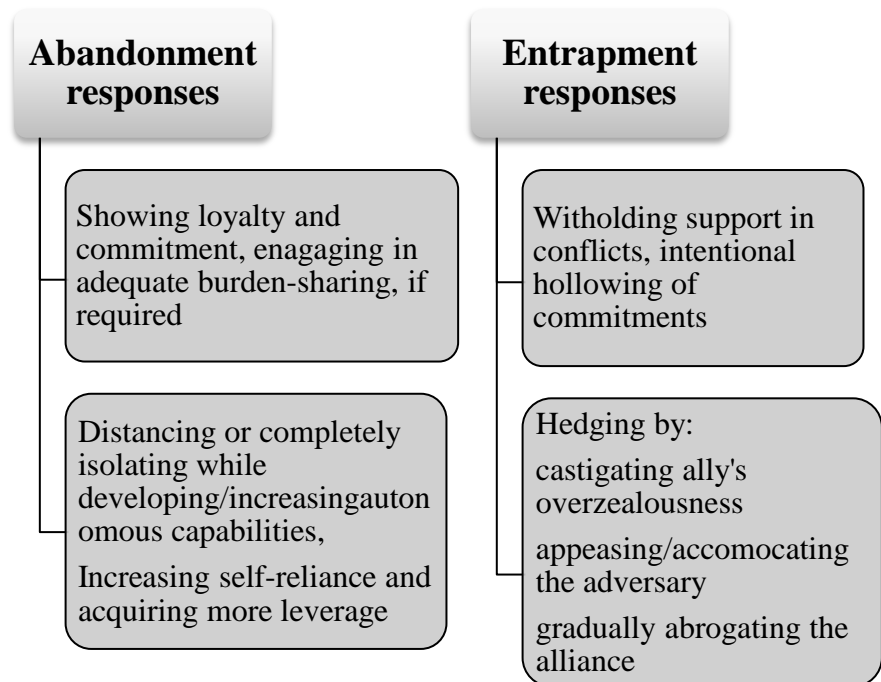
Nevertheless, Kim (2011) presents an alternative view on this concept, suggesting that the occurrences of being entrapped against one’s will are extremely rare, and the importance attached to this variable, as an explanation of disturbances within the alliance, is considerably misplaced. More specifically, Kim (2011: 3-4) suggests that entrapment is severely understudied precisely because of the lack of such an occurrence within the alliance context: "little accumulation of knowledge on the phenomenon of entrapment, and contractual aspects of alliances". He insists that alliances are contracts, hence, entrapment stands as a misleading term, which should be replaced by a broader notion of entanglement “that is precipitated by offensive or risky behavior not agreed upon in advance”, and which is an expected outcome of alliance

arrangements in general (Kim, 2011: 9, 12). Kim criticizes both, Snyder and Mandelblau for failing to capture this opportunistic element of intra-alliance security dilemma, claiming that it distorts theoretical and policy expectations within the field of alliance management and sustainability (ibid.). Interestingly, tying this notion to the strategy of inaction, waffling (Teraoka, 2015) or general hesitation of an ally in providing instant support during the times of crisis, it appears to be the case that hesitation does not carry much of an explanatory value when it comes to alliance endurance, because an ally will eventually adhere if the commitments are clearly outlined and interests converge.

Overall, it becomes evident, that Snyder's conceptualization captures the external threat dimension, something that was largely dismissed by other studies, quite eloquently. Importantly, Snyder (1990: 109, 116) suggests, that in the face of an intensifying external threat, the alliance behaviour and its endurance prospects become more dependent on "verbal utterances of many kinds- —diplomatic notes, official statements, etc.— as well as physical acts, such as movements of forces", and divergences in strategic interests can be rectified through political interactions in the form of "friendly gestures, concessions, symbolic demonstrations". It is important to acknowledge that Snyder's (1984) study is largely theoretical; it does not offer sufficient empirical backing, especially with regards to assessment and classification of different degrees of conflict with the opponent. For instance, it does not incorporate the crucial element of costly signaling and it is somewhat dismissive of differing threat perceptions between the allies. It appears to be the case that Snyder equates "disparity of interests in conflict with the opponent" with diverging threat perceptions, instead of treating perceptions as a source of those differing interests. However, this study will rely heavily on Snyder's identified factors of "explicitness [or vagueness] of commitments, behavioral record... [and] differences vis-à-vis the opponent" as "proximate determinants...of likelihoods" of the abandonment-entrapment fear-triggered policy choices (Snyder, 1984: 477).



**Table 1. Responses to twin abandonment-entrapment anxieties<sup>22</sup>**



**“Romantic” strategic triangle theory**

The severity of security dilemma between the perceived adversaries and the abandonment-entrapment balance between the allies, which effectively translates into the question of alliance durability (Cohen, 2005: 6), can be viewed as a result of the balancing dynamics, quality of bilateral relationship (Dittmer, 1992) or degree of (or deadliness) relative power distribution among the poles of a “strategic triangle” (Schweller, 1998). As an analytical construct, a strategic triangle rests on three conditions largely derived from Waltz’s (1979) observations: sovereignty, rationality of actors, whose policies are not “inhibited from expedient maneuver by alliance commitments or ideological dogmatism”; contingency of the trilateral relationship, centrality of each participant “to the game at least insofar as a “defection” would critically shift the strategic balance” (Dittmer, 2014: 10). The configurations of such triangles, carrying differing outcomes with regards to operation of security dilemmas, rest on “oversimplified” positive (amity) or negative (enmity) nature of interactions, whereby differing levels of amity and enmity form: a) unit veto triangle, b) stable

<sup>22</sup> Derived from the analysis conducted by Teraoka (2015)

marriage, c)romantic triangle, d) ménage a trois (Dittmer, 2014: 11). This clearly elucidates deficiencies inherent in realist approaches, treating enmity/amity relations as given, instead of being dependent on identity-constructing interactions between the states, which are also rooted in cultural and historical legacies; in this framework, it is implied that a transformation of the triangle is a result of changes in the surrounding international environment. Hence, it is important not to exaggerate the importance of operation of the everlasting balance in power distribution and its stabilizing effects, as promoted by structural realists. Indeed, power transition theory posits that the emergence of a new power, which effectively threatens to surpass the existing hegemon, not only cannot be discounted as predominantly unbelligerent occurrence<sup>23</sup>, but instead should be viewed as one of the key determinants in the evolution of trilateral relationships, a pre-condition for endangered solidarity between the existing allies, especially if the middle power is impotent in reinforcing “the dominant state’s power preponderance over its potential challenger...[and playing] a mediating role of persuading the rising potential challenger to be more satisfied with the status quo” (Kim, 2015: 251).

In a similar manner, Ito (2003) suggests that structural logic of “triangles” aids in a more detailed exploration of abandonment fears experienced by a state, which finds itself at the weakening pole. More specifically, he draws inspiration from Nixon’s opening to China in 1972, as a clearest illustration of the interplay of Japanese abandonment fears, which triggered Japanese leaders to normalize relationship with China on their part, inspiring “US policymakers with fear of a growing Sino-Japanese collaboration” (Ito, 2003: 16). However, in particular context, it is important not to dismiss the fact that during the Cold War era, the U.S.-Japan alliance was also operating under pressures of trilateral U.S.-China-USSR relationship, which carried a significant potential to shift enmity/amity balance in the U.S.-China-Japan triangle. However, with Russia gradually adopting more assertive postures in its neighbourhood, it becomes evident that there are certain structural resemblances between Cold War era and the 21<sup>st</sup> century strategic Sino-American-Japanese triangle, which requires closer examination

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<sup>23</sup> See Organski, A. F. K. (2000) *World Politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958; and Ronald L. Tammen, et al., *Power Transitions: Strategies for the 21st Century*. New York: Chatham House.

in order to capture the potential effect it exhibits on the cohesion and durability of the U.S.-Japan alliance ties. However, one has to be wary of equating current Russia and USSR, as well as treating China as neatly filling the threat vacuum left by USSR as a strategic anchor for the alliance to rely on.

### **Limitations and merging of theories in the spirit of analytical eclecticism**

Evidently, the conceptual apparatus for framing and assessing the topic of alliance durability, adopted in this paper, relies heavily on the insights presented within the realist school of thought, with balance of threat theory, intra-alliance security dilemma, and structural triangles at its core. This is not to imply that such an approach is the most suitable for examining alliance behaviour and durability in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In fact, constructivist focus on the effects that domestic configurations exert on norms, which underlie institutional stability and perseverance, and the respective shifts in state identity would aid in any explanation of Japan's choices in choosing certain security trajectories. In fact, Katzenstein and Okawara (1993: 104) employ constructivist analytical framework in investigating Japan's security posture shifts from flexible to more rigid, and eventually contend that "the normative consensus that embraces Japanese security policy is shaped by the historical lessons of World War II and the reemergence of Japan as a peaceful and prosperous actor in world politics since 1945". In the meantime, a more recent application of constructivist theoretical expectations by Singh (2008) serves to disprove the prevailing consensus that Japan possesses an enduring peace-state identity. He claims that it is "the international-state label" that captures Japanese emerging security policy in the most accurate manner (Singh, 2008: 304).

However, exclusive adherence to constructivist explanations and normative constraints is likely to fall short of capturing the importance of external dimension of alliance politics. In fact, a number of scholars increasingly resort to a form of *analytic eclecticism* with the *Pragmatist Ethos* at its core, famously defended by Albert Hirschman, observing that: "ordinarily, social scientists are happy enough when they have gotten hold of one paradigm or line of causation. As a result, their guesses are often farther off the mark than those of the experienced politician whose intuition is more likely to take a variety of forces into account." (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010: 3). In a

more concrete context of the U.S.-Japan alliance, as a crucial part of Japan's security policy, Katzenstein insists that the "broadening of theoretical spectrum" calls for an alternative approach in the form of analytical eclecticism, which effectively incorporates "elements drawn from three different styles of analysis – the testing of alternative explanations, the rendering of synthetic accounts, and historically informed narratives" (Sil and Katzenstein, 2008: 3). One of the early attempts to carry out such examination in the context of the U.S.-Japan alliance was carried out by Izumikawa (2010), who embraced the blending of realist notions of "entrapment" and constructivist focus on longevity of Japan's "antimilitarist" identity.

## **Chapter II. Methodology**

### **Research questions and theoretical expectations**

The overarching research questions, derived as much from the existing literature as from the increasing salience of the issue in the real world settings, are: a) how the mere existence and shifting magnitude of an external threat, on a par with the strategic triangle theory, affects the equilibrium of entrapment-abandonment tradeoffs; b) in what manner allies choose to solve the intensified security dilemma, and what potential reputational costs do such choices cover; c) why asymmetry in capabilities and commitments does not necessarily result in increased chances of alliance endurance. The sub-topics involve mitigating effects that increased institutionalization and formalization of existing agreements have on alliance twin anxieties, and how such reassurance in the form of exhibiting deterrent qualities affects lasting reputation and future courses of action as chosen by allies. Furthermore, the paper explores whether hesitation in the face of the crisis, termed “waffling” strategy, represents fading commitments to an ally and how it feeds into increasingly mistrust-driven responses.

Hence, theoretical expectations are: a) a stronger ally will exhibit a certain degree of hesitation in the face of crisis, if it is in any way dependent or has vested interests in engaging the threatening state; b) the operation and severity of intra-alliance security dilemma will be dependent on the condition, implying an important role of reputation for reliability a); c) in line with Morrow’s (1991) theory, asymmetry will be treated as having a positive effect on respective durability of security ties, and institutionalization will be treated as a sign of willingness to mitigate allied anxieties.

### **Research design**

The preferred way forward in this examination of the U.S.-Japan intra-alliance dynamics is a single-case study, which allows for the selection of a case based on interest (Stake, 2005) and/or theoretical reasons (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007). The US-Japan alliance, with the Senkaku dispute at its core and China acting as an external strategic anchor influencing intra-alliance, neatly fits Yin’s (2002:13, 2009) definition of a case as “a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, especially when the boundaries between a phenomenon and context are not clear and

the researcher has little control over [them]”. Given the broad nature of the “how” and “why” research questions, and the existence of “many more variables of interest than data points”, the case study develops on the basis of previously established “theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (Yin, 2002: 13-14). Here, the paper largely embraces the analytic eclecticism approach, which allows for considerable flexibility while also remaining “consistent with an ethos of pragmatism in seeking engagement with the world of policy and practice....[formulating] problems that are...more closely approximate the messiness and complexity of concrete dilemmas facing “real world” actors...[and] exploring these problems [through] complex causal stories that extricate, translate and selectively recombine analytic components...embedded in competing research traditions (Sil and Katzenstein, 2010: 1). The chosen case study approach differs significantly from quantitative experiments in so far as contextual conditions, stemming from the environment, instead of being explicitly delineated and controlled for, form a major “part of the investigation” (Ridder, 2017: 282). This effectively suggests that case study research entails a largely descriptive element resurfacing throughout the examination of a certain phenomenon “such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit” (Merriam, 1998: xiii). More specifically, this particular study draws inspiration from the unique distinctive attributes” singled out by Merriam (1998), namely particularism in case focus, thick description of the phenomenon, heuristic approach, which appropriately illuminates the understanding of a case under examination.

Furthermore, this study will adhere as much as possible to Stake’s (2005) identified three characteristics of fruitful qualitative case study-based inquiry: holistic approach, which takes into account the interactions between the phenomenon and its external environment, empirical examination, and interpretative means of arriving to conclusions. To be more precise, the investigation of the U.S.-Japan alliance ties proceeds in a manner deemed to be of “maximum instrumentality” for answering the proposed research questions in a “logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusions” (Yin, 2002: 20). Even more so, on a par with Yinian tradition, the thesis first reviews relevant literature and derives certain theoretical expectations from it, and in doing so, distinguishes itself

from” such methodologies as grounded theory and ethnography“ (Yazan, 2015: 140). Hence, this examination dismisses the overly flexible Parlett and Hamilton’s (1972) approach based on “progressive focusing”, meaning that the course of the study is not being “charted in advance”, restricted by timelines or embedded in existing literature review (as cited in Stake, 1995: 22). This study, however, chooses to bind the empirical examination by a time frame, which is rather fluid in its nature. More specifically, the investigation, while focusing on the developments starting with 2010, will also place the recent occurrences into a wider context provided by inquiry into events tracing back to 1971.

Notably, even given that the paper does not proceed on the basis of strictly delineated hypotheses, it becomes rather evident that the dependent variable in this investigation is alliance durability, while the existence and intensification of an external threat is treated as an independent condition. Other variables, such as fears of abandonment and entrapment, are awarded the status of intervening effect-maximizing conditions. Overall, the major shortfall of such approach is the decreased likelihood of establishing explicit causal connections. Instead, this method allows generating correlations and associations between closely intertwined variables. In other words, the extensive grasp of this approach comes at the expense of generating accurate causal relationships

### **Sources**

It becomes rather clear that the study will draw inspiration from constructivist epistemology. Hence, the chosen sources and methods of investigation stand as largely qualitative in their nature. More specifically, the case study will rely on the following sources, which Yin’s (2002: 96) treats as sufficiently evidentiary : public statements of security and defense community representatives, press releases entailing comments made by key officials of the U.S. and Japan, media outlets entailing voiced opinions of military professionals and academics, secondary sources, which involve readily conducted interviews with key authorities in the field of foreign and security policies, primary sources in the form of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and Ministry of Defense (MOD) reports, White Papers for Defense, and the comparative investigation of the Guidelines for the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation (1978, 1997, 2015).

## **Limitations**

One of the major methodological limitations from which this study suffers is heavy reliance on secondary, primarily media and interviews conducted by native language speakers, sources in the context of examination of Japanese policymakers' views on a wide range of matters relating alliance politics. In other words, the major shortcoming is constituted by inability to appraise existing primary sources due to language barrier. This is somewhat mitigated by the increasing tendency among Japanese institutions (MOD and MOFA) and media outlets (largely Japan Times) to present information regarding the U.S.-Japan alliance in an English version too. On the top of that, placing an overly excessive focus on rhetoric of policymakers can effectively distort the overall picture of phenomenon under examination.

Additional impediment is based on the inherent lack of generalizable quality of single-case studies. Not only is this study preoccupied with dynamics within a single alliance; it also restricts itself to a relatively narrow period of examination, with a salient issue at its core. This arguably makes such study results applicable to the future behaviour only of this particular alliance.



### **Chapter III. Case study: the U.S.-Japan alliance**

#### **The nature of the U.S.-Japan alliance as an anchor of regional stability**

Given that the nature and existing structure of a particular alliance is perceived as one of the explanatory factors for its durability by Walt (1987), and the balance towards symmetry or asymmetry serves as a means to assess the likelihood of intra-alliance security dilemma severity by Snyder (1984), it is useful to look at the original configurations of the U.S.-Japan security liaisons. From the very beginning, with the signing of the 1951 Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan, and the 1960 revision of "Treaty of Mutual Cooperation between Japan and the United States", the security partnership was solidified, on the basis of restricting Japan's military capability and filling the void of its defence with the deployment of the US military forces:

*“In exercise of [an inherent right of individual and collective self-defense], Japan desires, as a provisional arrangement for its defense, that the United States of America should maintain armed forces of its own in and about Japan so as to deter armed attack upon Japan“*  
*(Bilateral Security Treaty between the United States of America and Japan (September 8, 1951)*

This clearly illustrates not only the fact of unequal distribution of capabilities and commitments, but also the accompanying desirability of such mutually beneficial security arrangement. In other words, Japan rested comfortably restricted in its military ambitions “under [U.S.’s] nuclear umbrella”, which was effectively preventing Japan from “potentially remilitarizing” and in so doing easing China’s anxieties about being attacked “out of the blue” (Green, 2008). This deliberate and voluntary establishment of asymmetry in a relationship invites questions if attempts to revoke it may possess such a detrimental effect as expected by theorists such as Morrow (1991). In fact, in the context of intra-alliance security dilemma, Teraoka (2015) cites multiple reasons why throughout the existence of this alliance, it was inconceivable for

Japan to trigger substantial entrapment fears among the US policy makers: a) its almost exclusive focus on economic growth; b) deeply socially and constitutionally ingrained pacifism which eradicated all ambitions of remilitarization.

However, frequently termed the “anchor for regional stability” (Bisley, 2008, MOD, 2005), the alliance have witnessed both externally and internally-triggered disturbances. Calder (2010: 21-22) asserts that the unusual durability of this alliance “should not lead us to wallow...in the dangerous swamp of self-congratulation”. More specifically, the 1951 Treaty and the following revisions and additions, have demonstrated the lack of bargaining power on the part of Japan, desperately trying to avoid entrapment in real and expected US adventurism abroad. Even more so, the strategic logic in which the alliance has been embedded for decades is eroding, with the domestic context presenting the allies with “complex and intractable” difficulties, such as “protracted Futenma mess”, resulting in conspicuous legitimacy problem inherent in quid pro quo interactions, backed by the “corrosive” resentment triggered among locals in Okinawa in the face of sexual violence assaults conducted by American troops (The Japan Times, 2008, CFR Smith, 2013). Notably, these stand as alliance cohesion disruptors which largely feed on domestic disturbances; there are also structural predicaments stemming from the interplay of triangular Sino-American-Japanese relationship.

### **China-U.S.-Japan triangle: disrupted cohesion in the levels of concern?**

*“[T]actics which promote the common interest in one game will tend to undermine the common interest in the other. Hence, when adversaries compromise their disputes in order to reduce tension, the solidarity of their alliances is weakened” (Snyder, 1990: 116)*

### **Sino-Japanese simmering rivalry<sup>24</sup>**

The first and perhaps most volatile relationship in the China-US-Japan strategic triangle is the Sino-Japanese liaison, perpetually confronting many contentious issues, what in turn, sets the stage “for a struggle between a mature power [Japan] and a rising one [China]” (Calder, 2006: 129). Admittedly, in order to achieve a thorough appreciation of the complexity of Sino-Japanese ties and identities these states awards to each other, as a relic of past grievances and resulting mistrust, one would have to conduct a more detailed analysis, extending beyond the scope of this paper, and based on the toolset provided largely by constructivist school of thought. Rather, this paper will adhere closely to the recent developments in Japanese foreign policy community, in the context of tensions over the disputed Senkaku islands.

In the recent defense thinking of Japanese policy makers, a shift from perception of China as a competitor in trade-related matter towards being labelled as a threatening assertive actor, appears to be rather straightforward and consensus-based, extensively acknowledged throughout the political rhetoric of Abe administration and meticulously examined in major defense white papers, starting from 2010 (The Guardian, 2015). For instance, 2016 Report on Statistics on Scrambles Through Fiscal Year 2016, demonstrates that the objective threat to Japan’s territorial integrity is stemming precisely from China, which, according to Green (2006), uses the dispute as an element to its wedging strategy, aimed at isolating and delegitimizing Japan as too reckless of an ally for the U.S. to effectively rely on (MOFA, 2017). Furthermore, according to 2013 report compiled by specialists at Carnegie Endowment for

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<sup>24</sup> Calder, K. (2006). China and Japan's Simmering Rivalry. [online] Foreign Affairs. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/asia/2006-03-01/china-and-japans-simmering-rivalry> [Accessed 11 May 2018].

International Peace (CEIP), Japanese decision-makers have grown increasingly concerned over “the increased tempo of Chinese air and naval activity in the East China Sea”, seeing it as a representation of emerging confidence among Chinese “in light of Japan’s objectively long strategic decline” (CEIP, 2013: 115-116). Even more so, China is being perceived as a deliberate disruptor of the U.S.-Japan allied cohesion, attempting to escalate tensions and “unilaterally change the status quo by force” (MOD, 2017: 101). Interestingly, interviews with Japanese security thinkers conducted by Guran in 2008 already explicitly illustrate gradual growth in Japanese anxieties and prevalent tendencies to identify China as a “potential threat”. On the top of that, the reluctance on the part of the U.S. to label China as a threat to its national security and, instead, choosing to treat it as a competitor with “common cause” (Financial Times, 2015) came across as a worrisome sign for the Japanese, further illustrated by the general disproportion in the amounts of attention paid to the issue of alliance management in 2010 National Security Strategy of the United States as compared to Japan’s White Defense Papers, constantly dedicating elaborate separate sections to the importance of deepening the U.S.-Japan alliance ties.

### **The U.S. abandonment by establishing condominium: Rebalance and Chimerica<sup>25</sup>**

Any examination of intra-alliance security dilemma requires taking into account the existing liaison the members to an alliance have established with the perceived adversary. In the context of the U.S.-Japan alliance, the status, although to a differing extent, is carried by China. In 2003, the U.S.-China trade had surpassed the U.S.-Japan trade in value terms (Calder, 2010: 22), this represented a broader trend of increased interdependence of Sino-American ties, with Buzan (2003) confidently contending that the evolution of this liaison stands as a defining feature of future courses in the security architecture of North-East Asia.

Notably, the most recent (re) opening of a “strategic dialogue” between Washington and Beijing, or the advent of the political “G2”<sup>26</sup> coupled with intrinsic economic liaison, termed “Chimerica marriage”, moderately resembles the 1971-72 warming of U.S.-China relationship, as illustrated by “ping-pong diplomacy” and 1972 Shanghai Communiqué, whereby:

*“The two sides agreed that countries, regardless of their social systems, should conduct their relations on the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, non-aggression against other states, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence” (cited in Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America, February 1978, 1972)*

This normalization of Sino-American ties had come at the expense of the Japanese fears of being abandoned as the U.S. prioritized ally in the region, as acknowledged by

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<sup>25</sup> Term coined by Niall Ferguson, Washington Post (2008). Niall Ferguson - Niall Ferguson Says U.S.-China Cooperation Is Critical to Global Economic Health. [online] Available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/11/16/AR2008111601736.html> [Accessed 10 May 2018].

<sup>26</sup> Term “Great-2”, as a representation of great power management, is further elaborated on and analysed by Zbigniew Brzezinski (the Center for Strategic and International Studies) and Fred Bergsten (Peterson Institute for International Economics). Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-united-states-and-china-a-g-2-in-the-making/>

President Nixon and Walter McConaughy during the phone conversation, where McConaughy expressed concerns about the Japanese being “greatly concerned”, and Nixon repeatedly reasserting the necessity of cooperation with China by stating that the U.S. allies “must be prepared for the fact, that there will continue to be a step-by-step, a more normal relationship with the other—the Chinese mainland. Because our interests require it. Not because we love them, but because they're there.”<sup>27</sup>

In a rather harsh manner, Silver (CFR, 2000: 11-12) insists that Japan “was chagrined” with Washington’s “leapfrogging” of Tokyo by secretly initiating Sino-American rapprochement, and this fear of being “blindsided and leapfrogged have resurfaced from time to time since 1972 in reaction to the twists and turns in U.S.-China relation”. This continuity in Japanese relative mistrust can also be illustrated by the expected wariness that Japan would exhibit if the U.S. attempts to “secure future stability with Beijing in a bilateral treaty to regulate regional BMD activity based on mutual vulnerability” (McNamara, 2016: 18-19). It is worth noting, that Japanese anxieties about the U.S. embarking on a journey of establishing a type of condominium with China previously occurred in the light of warming Sino-Japanese relationship, marked by the signing of 1978, August 12, peace and friendship treaty, which temporarily put Senkaku island issue aside, representing one of high points in the liaison. The agreement was shortly followed by the first notable rearrangement and formalization of the U.S.-Japan alliance ties in the form of the 1978, November 27, Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation, towards a more committed U.S. and less entrapped Japan. Overall, the unexpected nature and secrecy of 1971 Kissinger’s visit has affected Washington’s reputation for reliability, which therefore was repeatedly translating into abandonment anxieties among the Japanese policy makers, embedded in efforts to preemptively accommodate the perceived adversary<sup>28</sup> and pressing necessity to revise, clarify and formalize implicitly held alliance obligations.

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<sup>27</sup> 136. Conversation Between President Nixon and the Ambassador to the Republic of China (McConaughy), available at: <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d136>

<sup>28</sup> Notably, during the Cold War, there was little disagreement over which state constitutes the strategic challenge to the alliance, it was USSR mutually perceived as a threat throughout security papers and rhetoric of the time.

On a related note, it is quite revealing that Japanese were exhibiting concerns about American intentions during the Cold War period, characterized by bipolarity with USSR as a strategic anchor for the U.S. “hub and spoke” alliance system, and the severity of intra-alliance security dilemma suppressed by structure: lack of realignment opportunities, genuine Chinese fears about Japanese remilitarization, and a strong U.S. interest in keeping Japan from falling into the Communist sphere of influence<sup>29</sup>.

This “Cold War” relic appears to be, to a certain extent, carried into the 21<sup>st</sup> century East Asian security order, with China gradually replacing USSR as a strategic rationale for reinvigorating the U.S.-Japan security ties, and “the often precarious balance the U.S. must seek to strike between its partnership with China and its alliance with Japan” (McNamara, 2016:16). More specifically, with the Obama’s *pivot*, later, as a damage repair, termed *rebalance* policy, marking recognition of the U.S.’s future being entangled with Asia’s future, came two reluctantly compatible policy trajectories: strengthening and reinvigorating regional alliances while also treating the “forging [of] a constructive and productive relationship with China... [as] an essential element” of the regional stabilizing efforts (Donilon, 2014: 3,6-7). Interestingly, Christensen (Foreign Affairs, 2015), states that using the term “pivot” as a representation of embarking on deeper engagement in Asia region was not only incorrect, given that policies attributable to this “pivoting”, such as “sending more submarines to Guam, rotating F-22 aircraft through Japan, sending littoral combat ships to Singapore, entering a free-trade pact with South Korea, and negotiating the Trans-Pacific Partnership” were initiated not by the Obama administration, but this “overly muscular language... fed into Chinese conspiracy theories about alleged U.S. containment and encirclement”. Even more ironically, this “linguistic stumble” invited anxieties on the part of the U.S. allies as well, fearing that, if the situation where the U.S. will be forced to deal with two or more issues simultaneously, “pivoting away” or, abandonment, will be considered as a natural course of action (Christensen, FA, 2015). These fears were further escalated by the November 17, 2009 U.S.-China Joint Statement in Beijing, whereby:

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<sup>29</sup> Themes resurfacing in Nixon’s phone call.

*“The two countries reiterated that the fundamental principle of respect for each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity is at the core of the three U.S.-China joint communiqués which guide U.S.-China relations. Neither side supports any attempts by any force to undermine this principle. The two sides agreed that respecting each other’s core interests is extremely important to ensure steady progress in U.S.-China relations.(The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, November 17, 2009”*

At a first glance, the overall amicable and reassuring nature of the statement does not seem as constituting a legitimate basis for concern on the part of the U.S.’s allies and partners in the region. Yet, the specific wording of the document, namely the embracement of each other’s *core* interests, triggered fears in Japan of being “eclipsed by China” and generated an “overwhelmingly pessimistic [attitude towards]... the future”, according to an American political scientist, Andrew Oros (BBC). Given that issue-spheres of sovereignty and territoriality, such as Taiwan, have been considered as falling into the zone of China’s *core interests*, the increased anxiety on the part of Japan can be treated as sufficiently warranted (Swaine, 2011). In fact, in 2013, the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying has clarified that “[t]he Diaoyu Islands are about sovereignty and territorial integrity. Of course, it’s China’s core interest” (The Japan Times, April 27, 2013). Not only does this expose the Chinese unwillingness to grant concessions over the dispute, but it also shows considerable sloppiness on the part of Washington, failing to anticipate Chinese incorporation of isle disputes under the “core interest umbrella”, and the resulting confusion-triggered abandonment anxiety in Tokyo, reflected in the deteriorating confidence that “the rise of U.S.-China relations does not come at the expense of the U.S.-Japan relationship” (*interview-based workshops, conducted by* Center for American Progress, March 17, 2017). What made matters worse, is China referring to this mutual commitment as establishing an “important consensus”, on the basis of which it can place “demands that Washington alter its behavior in a variety of areas, from arms sales to Taiwan to presidential meetings with the Dalai Lama” (Swaine, 2011: 6-7, Taipei Times, January 22, 2011). Yet, early in 2010, the Obama administration has proceeded on the basis of traditional



policy approach rooted in country's "legal, moral, and strategic principles": promotion of Internet freedom, and selling defense arms to Taiwan, to name a few (Christensen, 2011:3), and realizing the unrealistic expectations the 2009 Statement has fueled among the Chinese, also purposefully omitted the contentious phrase in the 2011 joint statement following the Hu Jintao's state visit to Washington (Swaine, 2011: 7). Nevertheless, from the perspective of the U.S. allies, the statement did stand as a sign of "undue weakness", to the extent it was "acceding to...Beijing's claim to...supposed territorial ambitions", and "asking of China [almost everything that] directly in the interests of the PRC itself" (Swaine, 2011: 7, Christensen, 2011: 2-3).

### **The U.S. abandonment by relapse into uncertain isolationism: Trump as a "wild card"**

With the arrival of the Trump administration, in 2016, with the largely forgotten questions about American relapse into isolationism at its core, have invited concerns about the U.S.-Japan alliance being threatened by its principal architect. As with 1972 rapprochement with China, this situation carries analogies derived from the European context, illustrated by Snyder (1984: 495), with European states finding it "conceivable, that The U.S., disillusioned with European obstinacy" will choose the path to hemispheric isolation. This further serves as an empirical backing for Jervis's (1976: 168) assertion that the devaluation of alliance value might effectively come with the changing leadership, which cannot be overly vigorously bound to the paths chosen by predecessors : "minds can be changed...values can shift", what triggers security dilemma triggered by fear, acquiring a life of its own.

Needless to say, Trump's accession to the presidency of the U.S. came with anxieties on the part of Japanese leaders, carefully observing Trump's statements and social media activity. What became rather evident from a closer look at Trump's tweets over time, is the fact that the U.S. increasing focus on trade might come at the expense of ensuring Japan's security: "The Trans-Pacific Partnership is an attack on America's business. It does not stop Japan's currency manipulation. This is a bad deal" (@realDonaldTrump, 22 Apr 2015). The following termination of TPP, which was supposed to be a cementing agent of the U.S.-Japan cooperation, was met with

increasing calls for reassurances on the part of Japan, which manifested in Abe's eagerness to meet Trump in informal setting, what in the context of the UK is referred to as "washing dirty linen in private" (Trench, 2009). Even more so, Trump's focus on transactional nature of interactions between states and the resulting focus on partners which offer most beneficial conditions for the U.S. economy to prosper, was complemented by the "America First" policy with regards to alliance commitments as well. More specifically, this policy, as a clear representation of unwillingness to get entangled over the conflicts the U.S. has no interests in, entailed both direct and implicit calls for the U.S. allies in Asia to develop their own nuclear strike capabilities, since maintaining "nuclear umbrella" over the region occupied by free-riders, was considered too costly of a strategy by Trump. And even though Trump has retreated from his initial position and initiated negotiations over a new trade deal with Japan, "numerous recent trips by high-ranking U.S. officials — including the secretary of defense, secretary of state and vice president — have reinforced the view that Tokyo remains shaken by the experience" (The Japan Times, April 26, 2017).

Nevertheless, what further complicates the U.S.-Japan alliance coherence in the age of Trump is an increasing recognition that tacking of North Korean threat requires a closer engagement with China, which can exert significant pressure in constraining North Korean nuclear adventurism. Despite the alleged ascent of trade wars between the U.S. and China, the two countries have engaged in constructive dialogue regarding trade most recently, on May 17 and 18 (Eurasia Future, May 19, 2018). Perhaps triggered by Trump shifting focus away from Japanese concerns towards prioritizing development or fruitful relationship with Chinese, Japan faced "particularly bruising few days...scrambling to remain diplomatically relevant" in the face of Trump's decision to accept North Korea's invitation for a personal meeting. And despite the following imposition of steel and aluminum tariffs on Japan, Abe has promptly announced that he will visit Trump as soon as possible. Daniel Sneider, a lecturer in East Asian studies at Stanford University, closely observing the recent evolution of the American-Japanese ties, has concluded:

*"You feel compelled immediately upon the news about the meetings with the North Koreans to go rush off to Washington in*

*order to reassure yourself? That's interesting...It means that it's a kind of relationship that requires that kind of constant shoring up personally."* (New York Times, March 13, 2018)

## **Chapter IV. A case study within a case study: Senkaku/Diaoyu island dispute<sup>30</sup> as a litmus<sup>31</sup> test for alliance durability**

### **Background<sup>32</sup>**

The issue of disputed sovereignty with regards to Senkaku/Diaoyu islands in the East China Sea has plagued not only the bilateral Sino-Japanese relationship, but also the broader regional security architecture for decades, with its origins as a resource competition rather than a territoriality dispute. This heightened interest in the islands of course has little to do with the land itself; what both countries<sup>33</sup> find particularly attractive is the surrounding waters, extensive natural resources within the economic zone, and, more generally, ability to control the sea routes. Essentially, both states present what they believe are well-justified and legitimate claims to the land, with Japan tracing the legality of its claim to 1971 Okinawa Reversion Treaty, whereby the U.S., being in charge of the administration of the islands since 1953, has transferred the respective rights to Japan, with the monitoring of effective control handled by the Japanese Maritime Safety Agency (MSA) (Wiegand, 2009: 172). Following the signing of the reversion treaty, China's Foreign Ministry made formal claims to the islands resting on the fact that the lands have formed a part of China's sovereign territory since 15<sup>th</sup> century, and any Japanese attempt to assert control over the islands would constitute "usurped ownership" (ibid.). However, it is worthy of note that the issue did not hamper significantly and was effectively put aside for a time being in the context of Japan's "accelerated engagement with China following the Sino-U.S. rapprochement of 1972" (Hughes, 2009: 839).

Notoriously hard to settle bilaterally, whether due to China's "dual strategy of issue linkage and coercive diplomacy" (Wiegand, 2009: 171) or "unresolved historical grievances and the politics of national identity" (Valencia, 2007: 157), the dispute often produces severe clashes, which, while not qualifying as an open "war", do

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<sup>30</sup> Notably, Taiwan Strait crisis (1995-1996) would serve as a perfect litmus test in the 90s setting, with Japan fearing to be entrapped in an unnecessary conflict

<sup>31</sup> Terminology adopted from Carl Bildt's (1994) examination of "The Baltic Litmus Test"

<sup>32</sup> A very detailed analysis of the legitimate claims to the island is presented available at: [https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo\\_eg/img/data/archives-senkaku03.pdf](https://www.cas.go.jp/jp/ryodo_eg/img/data/archives-senkaku03.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Admittedly, Taiwan also has claims to the disputed islands, which it calls Taioyutai Islands.

fall into the gray zone category of military confrontation. The “Uotsurijima lighthouse dispute” stands as one of the best illustrations of the fragility of intra-conflict relationship between these two states, whereby, in response to Japan’s ratification of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1996 (granting Japan the right to enforce Exclusive Economic Zone), Japanese nationalist activists have built a lighthouse structure as a symbol of asserting state’s sovereignty over the islands. In turn, this has invited harsh responses from Chinese Foreign Ministry, accusing Japan of revival in militarism and linking the lighthouse incident to Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto visiting Yasukuni Shrine, and the denial of Nanking atrocities of 1937, which taken together appeared to Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Guofang as a valid justification for deploying two submarines to the islands: “[a]ll these [events] added up to giving a green light to these actions and remarks of the Japanese right wing groups...[which] are not accidental and directly related to the attitude of the Japanese government” (cited in Wiegand, 2009: 183; *Associated Press*, August 29, 1996; *Kyodo News Service*, August 29, 1996; *Jiji Press*, September 10, 1996). Interestingly, Taiwan went as far as considering a “secret plan” of deploying “elite troops on Senkakus to destroy the lighthouse” (*Asahi Shimbun*, 5 December 2012)<sup>34</sup>.

Despite the clearly evident tensions and fractures in Sino-Japanese relationship since the advent of this issue, China’s approach to the matter is considered as quite low-key prior to 2010 (Fravel, 2016). Indeed, rapid escalations followed the 2010 incident of collision between Chinese fishing boat and Japanese coastguard ships, with *China Daily*, a newspaper run by Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China, reporting:

*“A wave of indignation is brewing in Chinese society, which might snowball into a major public outcry if the Japanese authorities continue to take a hardline stance”*  
(cited in *The Guardian*, September 9, 2010).

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<sup>34</sup> Overall, the perpetual cycle of confrontations, the inherent inextricability of the issue, and the issue linkage with Japan–US security agreements (Wiegand, 2009: 171) in some measure, points to Gibler’s (2008) narrative of an assertive enemy being the result of vague alliance commitments or the symptom of a diminishing reliability of alliance as a whole.

The bilateral relationship, plummeting to its “lowest point in years”, has experienced yet another setback caused by 2012 purchase of 3 islands in the chain, under the auspices of the so-called “the outspoken and hawkish” Ishihara’s plan, at the bottom of which lies an attempt to protect Japanese territory, and whether China accepts it as a legitimate course of action or not is irrelevant (The Japan Times, April 18, 2012). Unsurprisingly, the decision has invited yet another wave of stark criticisms, accusations of stealth and “a show of strength” in the form of sending “maritime law enforcement ships” to the disputed area (The New York Times, September 11, 2012), revealing, according to Fravel (2016), China’s “relatively weak position”.

In November 2013, the situation has escalated further, with China declaring Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) supposedly covering Senkakus, termed as a “Fourth Wall in the Sky”, as a “necessary measure taken by China in exercising its self-defense right...not directed against any specific country or target“ (Ministry of National Defense of PRC, 2013, as cited in Brookings, December 17, 2013). Despite this somewhat vague reassurance, the chances of a potential clash between these powers seemed to have skyrocketed, with China’s actions viewed by a senior U.S. intelligence officer, Captain James Fanell, as a preparation for “short, sharp war to destroy Japanese forces in the East China Sea, followed with what can only be expected, a seizure of the Senkakus or even the southern Ryukyus” (Brookings, February 25, 2014). Responding to this measure and Chinese self-proclaimed rights to enforce it, Japan insisted that such act constitutes an unacceptable unilateral effort to “change the status quo in the East China Sea, escalating the situation, and that may cause unintended consequences”<sup>35</sup>. Kerry mirrored Japanese concern about alteration of *status quo*<sup>36</sup>, and Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel reaffirmed that “this announcement by the People's Republic of China will not in any way change how the United States

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<sup>35</sup> MOFA Statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs (of Japan) on the announcement on the ‘East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone’ by the Ministry of National Defense of the People’s Republic of China,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, available at: [http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e\\_000098.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press4e_000098.html)

<sup>36</sup> “Statement on the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone,” U.S. Department of State, available at <https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/11/218013.htm>

conducts military operations in the region... The United States reaffirms its longstanding policy that Article V of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Defense Treaty applies to the Senkaku Islands<sup>37</sup>. Further U.S.-Japanese security relationship regarding the issue of Senkaku islands was developing against this background of intractable tensions.

**Pressing dilemma of response: distancing through the strategy of inaction?**

*“Japan feels isolated, and cannot understand why Washington remains neutral over this sovereignty dispute. Japan has a point. The United States has dined out on a neutral stance — falling back on apathy toward the outcomes of territorial disputes throughout Asia, as long as they are “resolved peacefully” — for a long time” (Foreign Policy, October 31, 2012).*

Given that the confrontations taking place around the issue of Senkaku islands did not comfortably qualify for the status and ramifications carried by direct attack or declaration of war, naturally, there was a considerable amount of strategic ambiguity followed by emerging mistrust after the incident. Jennifer Lind, associate professor of government at Dartmouth College, states that:

*“Senkaku dispute represents “an area where we see a really fascinating transformation in the alliance dynamic, where there’s been a complete swing in the fear of entrapment...[f]or sixty years, the Japanese were afraid that we would drag them into a war. Now, we have the opposite problem in the Diaoyu/Senkakus.” (Council on Foreign Relations, July 1, 2014)*

Snyder’s (1990: 114) warning that any advantageous situation in the entrapment-abandonment balance “must not be exploited too vigorously”, due to its degrading influence on alliance solidarity, stands as particularly relevant in this context. First and foremost, the fact that up until 2014, four years after the commencement of rapidly escalating tensions, there was no explicit statement on the part of the US leadership does point to the direction of escalating severity in intra-alliance security

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<sup>37</sup> Statement by Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel on the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone, available at: <http://archive.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=16392>

dilemma. The transitional period itself is defined as “puzzling silence” by Teraoka (2015), with a worrisome inconsistency in “both public and private statements made by top U.S. government and military officials on this issue from 1996 to 2014” (2015: 79). The summary of these conversations reveal that the application of Article V<sup>38</sup> to the Senkaku contingency was seriously considered for the first time only in September, 2012 by Leon Panetta, Secretary of Defense under Obama Administration, in the Remarks with Japanese Minister of Defense. And perhaps more strikingly, as Teraoka (2015: 89) there was no mentioning of this contingency and its ramifications for the U.S. security and Asia strategy during throughout the official statement accompanying 2013 National Defense Authorization Act before the US Senate. Yet, this is where the focus solely on public speeches would render incomplete results and flawed conclusions, because the act itself, under Section 1286, *Sense of Congress on the Situation in the Senkaku Islands*, explicitly defined the US position on the matter, stating that: “the unilateral action of a third party will not affect the United States’ acknowledgment of the administration of Japan over the Senkaku Islands; the United States...opposes efforts at coercion, the threat of use of force, or use of force by any claimant in seeking to resolve sovereignty and territorial issues in the East China Sea; and, the United States reaffirms its commitment to the Government of Japan under Article V of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security” (U.S. Congress, 126 STAT. 2040). While this does not necessarily mean that Barack Obama himself has embraced such interpretation of the Senkaku dispute, it does give a sense of a general direction what the U.S. strategic policy was shifting towards, which was a policy of strict adherence to the guidelines and the defense treaty regulating its bilateral relationship with Japan.

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<sup>38</sup> Article V of the *Treaty Of Mutual Cooperation and Security Between Japan and the United States of America (1954, revised 1960)* states: “Each Party recognizes that an armed attack against either Party in the territories under the administration of Japan would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and declares that it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes. Any such armed attack and all measures taken as a result thereof shall be immediately reported to the Security Council of the United Nations in accordance with the provisions of Article 51 of the Charter. Such measures shall be terminated when the Security Council has taken the measures necessary to restore and maintain international peace and security.”



Nevertheless, a firm and somewhat reassuring stance for the first time was taken by Joe Biden in his meeting with Abe Shinzo in March, 2013, whereby Vice President has “delivered a carefully calibrated show of support...stopping short of a demand that Beijing reverse itself...[in] a dispute [the U.S.] wishes neither to mediate nor to see escalate” (The New York Times, December 3, 2013). However, on December 4, The White House, Office of the Vice President, released a report on *Remarks by Vice President Joe Biden and President Xi Jinping of the People's Republic of China*, in which Senkaku issue was completely and perhaps deliberately omitted, given that the focus of the talks was revolving around the revival of the Sino-American ties:

*“The relationship that you and President Obama have established thus far is full of promise and real opportunity for us. If we get this relationship right, engender a new model, the possibilities are limitless” (Biden, 2013).*

This inconsistency in assurance statements and the overwhelming reluctance to recognize the severity of the issue for Japan’s security can be partially attributable to the gap in threat perception. It became apparent from Biden’s statements that, at the time, China was being perceived by the U.S. more as a potential partner, rather than an assertive adversary actively threatening status quo in East-Asia region (the White House, December 4, 2013). Interestingly, one of the first oppositions to China’s actions undermining Japan’s administrative control of the disputed islands, which was not followed by any assertions of importance of maintaining good relationship with China in parallel, came on January 18, 2013, from Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton<sup>39</sup>. This constituted one of the earliest attempts to reinvigorate the U.S. diplomacy<sup>40</sup>, facing troubles in scurrying “to get ahead of and influence, rather than simply reacting to and exercising damage control toward, the escalating dangers of the Japan-China dispute, drawing “an immediate, furious protest in Beijing” (Forbes, February 7, 2013). However, Stephen Harner perceives such statements as “unfortunate

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<sup>39</sup> Remarks With Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida After Their Meeting available at: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2013/01/203050.htm>

<sup>40</sup> It is tempting to infer that such protests are a reflection of anxieties on the part of Chinese, with regards to the US’s toughening stance on the matter based on the willingness to “pivot” towards Japan at the risk of damaging the favourable evolution of Sino-American relationship.

mistakes” and a form of “cheap talk” to mitigate Tokyo’s misperceptions and delusions that the U.S. “reciprocates” the priority that Japan attaches to the U.S. as an ally, while in reality it is “G2” relationship that the U.S. is reluctant to “compromise or endanger” (ibid.). Hugh White, professor of strategic studies at the Australian National University in Canberra, goes as far as suggesting that the Obama administration reluctance and ambivalence offers China “a window of opportunity... to stage a clash over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, which [would be reduced or deterred only] if [U.S. statements]...[carry] real credibility” (The National Interest, July 15, 2014). As a matter of fact, faced with Japanese concerns over a scenario of surprise Chinese invasion, Philip Crowley, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Public Affairs, via teleconference has responded that “we do not envision that this current tension will rise to that level in any foreseeable scenario”, while also trying to refrain from the question if “the U.S.-Japan defense treaty covering the Senkaku Islands”<sup>41</sup>.

Undoubtedly this stands as a complicating factor for maintaining credibility, further intensified by the fact that most of the US’s public statements were largely “reactive” to exerted pressures by Japanese officials and policymakers. This points to the hesitation or “waffling” strategy as a deliberate attempt to avoid responsibility, since “[m]aking statements voluntarily is an indication of how willing a government is to demonstrate its commitment” (Teraoka, 2015: 80). Nevertheless, in April, 2014, the U.S. President Barack Obama has ultimately issued a statement at a joint press conference following the summit at the State Guest House in the Akasaka district:

*“Let me reiterate that our treaty commitment to Japan’s security is absolute. And Article 5 (of the treaty) covers all territories under Japan’s administration, including the Senkaku Islands... We share a concern about China’s land reclamation and construction activities in the South China Sea, and the United States and Japan are united in our commitment[s]” (The Japan Times, April 24, 2014, The White House Office of the Press Secretary, April 28, 2015).*

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<sup>41</sup> Remarks to the Press, Available at: <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/09/147836.htm>

Nevertheless, it was also continuously stressed that the U.S. refuses to take a position on the question of Senkaku's sovereignty, and that China remains "a critical country...[with] enormous opportunities for trade, development, working on common issues, like climate change" (The Japan Times, April 24, 2014). In a similar manner as Biden, Obama insisted that his statement does not depart from the positions of past administrations, and this "standard interpretation" should not be viewed as "drawing [new] red lines" over the Senkaku issue (ibid.). This "double-speak" rhetoric, termed as "contradictory" and instilling "a sense of skepticism in Japan", did little to reassure Tokyo, especially in the face of "Obama's conspicuous inaction and silence on China's 2012 seizure of the disputed Scarborough Shoal from the Philippines, despite America's long-standing mutual defense treaty with Manila". Such circumstances fit neatly into Gibler's (2008: 433) contention that "disreputable partners" are largely unable to "provide credible signals capable of deterring" aggressive behaviour against "their protégés".

Furthermore, addressing the issue of timing, it is worth noting that, while carefully tailored to mitigate Japanese anxieties without risking to endanger far-reaching benefits of closer cooperation with China, the statement did little to tackle the uneasiness among Japanese policymakers, further enhanced by the fact that the recognition of Senkaku's salience took place not in the immediate aftermath of belligerent actions, but rather as a "linking" issue in Obama's effort to reach an agreement on the trade pact (Trans-Pacific Partnership). Indeed, the discourse, involving calls for reaching the equilibrium with regards to distribution of Japanese and American cars, comes across as rather odd against the backdrop of severe security concerns experienced by Japan. In fact, one might go as far as inferring that this stands as an example of deliberate, yet, implicit "coercive issue linkage", with the U.S. support in the Senkaku contingency being dependent on the outcomes on the TTP negotiations. This implies that the supposed "irrefutability" of this supportive stance, as an ultimate determinant of finalized adherence strategy by the U.S. (Teraoka, 2015), is vulnerable in a sense that it draws "inspiration" not from the strict adherence to the treaty text itself, but rather from circumstance-driven cost-benefit calculations.

The Senkaku tensions were indeed increasing against the background of significant improvements and increased communication in Sino-American relationship, which rendered Japan “a nervous onlooker with vested interests” (McNamara, 2016: 16). As mentioned before, a rather similar situation arose in 1972, during the years of the Nixon administration and the introduction of rapprochement strategy. Hence, it is unsurprising that, in the recent context of very real likelihood of military escalation, Japan newly found itself plagued with abandonment anxiety about reliability of its closest ally. Hence, the gradual recovery of somewhat amicable Sino-American ties partially explains differently perceived levels of urgency within the alliance, with Japan being anxious due to the reluctance on the part of the US to offer more than vague assurances, and the U.S., resting on the opposite side of the security dilemma spectrum, fearing to be entrapped in a conflict not only of a less than moderate importance, but also carrying a detrimental value in recently revived cooperation with China. It also becomes evident that the U.S. was trying to tackle security dilemmas on both levels, the one with a perceived adversary state, and one within the alliance, whereas the improvement in one liaison meant a very likely setback in another. The stark interconnectedness of “adversary game” and “alliance game” in this context only further illustrates, that in order to ensure survival of its alliance system “in geopolitically tense regions”, the U.S. has to engage in constant “maintenance” efforts coupled with “highly delicate” diplomacy (McNamara, 2016: 22).

## **The Guidelines for the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation: mitigating the intra-alliance security dilemma by increasing the degree of institutionalization**

Nevertheless, a comparative analysis of the Guidelines for the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation, developing in a consistent manner as a response to external disturbances (1978 briefly, 1997, 2015), reveals a significant increase in the degrees of institutionalization and formalization of alliance ties, while the very fact that such guidelines are being negotiated reveal strife for formalization of alliance commitments. Such occurrences, in the context of Snyder's (1984) alliance security theory, signal that one party to the security arrangement suffers from anxiety triggered by fears of abandonment, whereby further formalization of ties and increased explicitness of the agreements serve as a reassurance mechanism. In practice, Rafferty (2003) throughout the extensive examination of bilateral alliances, investigating the 1978 and 1997 Guidelines in parallel, reveals that, initially, the U.S.-Japan alliance was operating largely on the basis of logic of informality and respective minimal institutionalization. The overarching purpose of such alliance ties was considered to be the statement of intentions, rather than setting the rules for effective military cooperation in the case of contingencies (Rafferty, 2003). From this, it appears to be the case that Rafferty's study somewhat fails to appreciate the gradual development of the formality in the alliance obligations. It does, however, establish three measures of institutionalization: institutional breadth and institutional depth, and policy coordination (Rafferty, 2003). Ikenberry (2001), however, suggests that gradually routinized ties, enhancement of cooperation and attaching more value to institutions was indeed taking place in the period between the adoption of the two Guidelines (1978, 1997). Here, Ikenberry's study implicitly coincides with Guran's (2008: 14) conclusion, namely that credible institutionalization, which carries a potential to reassure the ally, is "characterised by patterned practices and expectations of behaviour [rather] than by formal organisations or bureaucratisation".

If analyzed against the background of previous Guidelines, the 2015 edition appears to be considerably more ambitious and threat-oriented, as exemplified

by the Interim Report 2013<sup>42</sup> calling for “seamless, robust, flexible, and effective bilateral responses; the global nature of the Japan-U.S. Alliance; cooperation with other regional partners; synergy across the two governments’ national security policies; and a whole-of-government Alliance approach” (MOFA, 2013:2). With regards to threat dimension, the term “persistent and emerging threats” is used throughout the finalized Guidelines continuously (MOFA, 2015). Yet, the threats themselves, China and North Korea, while widely discussed in the public realm and media, are not explicitly referred to in the Guidelines. Nevertheless, the consistent reference to volatile threat environment implies that the strategic anchor acting as alliance “glue” remains the existence of an external threat, which shifted from the USSR to China.

Admittedly, the document does entail “identity and value” dimensions, as well as the assertion that the Japan-U.S. alliance is now characterized as having global responsibility for peace and that situations threatening peace and security are no longer “geographical” in their nature (MOFA, 2015: 7), what stands in a stark contrast to previously codified commitments and actions. In fact, due to its profound antimilitarist culture and extensive focus on economic development, Japan was extremely cautious in defining the scope of its formal commitments to the US, going as far as negotiating the exclusion of the term “Pacific” from the previous treaty text (Teraoka, 2015). While this does serve as an illustration of intra-alliance security dilemma, more specifically, the fear of entrapment, the particular situation is unique, because it is the weaker ally who was plagued with “fierce entrapment fears”, resisting the exerted pressure by the U.S. attempting to “get Japan more involved in regional security” and provide support for the “U.S. engagement in global conflicts” (Teraoka, 2015: 71). Importantly, this occurrence does not sit well with the theoretical expectations derived from the neorealist alliance security dilemma literature.

Going back to attaching the label of global power for peace through engagement in humanitarian and peacekeeping missions, Hughes (2007:325-6, 2004) remains highly skeptical of the genuine intentions underlying such claims, asserting that this display of “a degree of strategic convergence on global security objectives”, as a

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<sup>42</sup> MOFA, 2013

response to U.S. “expectations for support in the ‘war on terror’”, serves a more practical purpose “as a political pretext for legitimating long-planned changes in military security policy that are often only marginally related to the U.S.’s anti-terrorism agenda”. On the top of that, Hughes (2017a) contends that Japan’s primary concern is to “obviate entrapment in U.S.-Japan alliance commitments” while simultaneously ensuring that its focus is “primarily on contingencies involving Japan”. Later on, a careful examination of the strategic environment allows him to conclude that Japan is choosing a different “security path” altogether with “proactive pacifism” at its core (2017a: 126). This is clearly supported by the more explicit commitments stemming from the revised Guidelines for U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation.

Indeed, the *section D.* of the new Guidelines, termed “Actions in Response to an Armed Attack against a Country other than Japan” states that Japan takes up a responsibility to:

*“respond to an armed attack against the United States or a third country, and Japan has not come under armed attack... cooperate closely to respond to the armed attack and to deter further attacks. Bilateral responses will be coordinated through the whole-of-government Alliance Coordination Mechanism”* (MOFA, 2015: 15).

This unprecedented posture of accepting the burden of “fighting alongside the United States, with the potentially enhanced risks of direct entrapment in contingencies if deterrence fails”, reveals the decline in Japan’s long pursued, hedging strategy (Hughes, 2017: 116). Interestingly, since for Snyder (1984: 488) the adoption and persistence of a hedging strategy stands for a reflection of entrapment fears by an ally, the current developments in the U.S.-Japan security ties, as partially illustrated by comparing 1997 and 2015 Guidelines for Defense Cooperation, point to the balance of fears shifting towards the abandonment anxiety on the part of Japan. Even more so, this revision of the Guidelines stands as a representation of Snyder’s (1984: 474) theoretical argument that a further evolution of “a formal, explicit contract” is prompted to serve as a complementary mitigating factor aimed at easing abandonment fears triggered by

embedded asymmetrical structure of alliance ties. In this context, through the placing of an excessive focus on building bilateral frameworks for defense cooperation<sup>43</sup>, the Guidelines appear to suggest that Japan's national security is being increasingly tied to that of the U.S., with invocations of heightened interest indivisibility, implying significant shifts in direct and indirect dependence, which, in the context of Snyder's (1984, 1990) theory, stand as indicators of the severity of intra-alliance security dilemma, more specifically, expected fears of abandonment and entrapment.

Another interesting and worthy of mentioning outcome of the comparative analysis of 1997 and 2015 Guidelines, is that the latter version does not explicitly refer to "limitations" in Japan's capacity to support the U.S., and changes in wording from "[t]he United States will provide appropriate support to Japan... U.S. Forces will support Self-Defense Forces... with necessary intelligence, and... the use of forces providing additional strike power" (MOFA, 1997, 3-4), to "the United States, *in accordance with its own criteria*, will provide appropriate support for Japan's activities" and multiple references to "mutual support" as opposed to expectations of one-sided support; and Japan's broadening "support for international activities" (MOFA, 2015: 17), as opposed to restricted cooperation in "international situations of mutual interest, especially in the Asia-Pacific region" (MOFA, 1997: 2). This shows that there are no significant shifts in the U.S. lasting focus on ensuring cooperation in the realm of global and regional contingencies, while Japan, being largely preoccupied with the security environment around itself and the U.S., under the revised Guidelines finds itself as "the first responder in any Senkaku contingency" as well as an equal partner to the U.S. in conflicts around the world. Here, it is important to note that, while it is tempting to assume that such shift in Japan's role is a result of the public demand or a more general shift in identity that is closer and more sensitive towards the U.S.'s world-wide commitments, in all likelihood, this transformation of Guidelines being a direct result of the Senkaku dispute is fueled by calculation of risks of being abandoned in the face of China's emerging assertiveness. The antimilitarist sentiment and pacifism is still present within Japan, and the desirability of the alliance and its forces being stationed on

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<sup>43</sup> Continuous references to the importance of "Alliance Coordination Mechanism" and operational cooperation (MOFA, 2015).



Japanese soil is still low<sup>44</sup>. Hence, the stability in the U.S. posture with no new burdensome demands and expectations tied to it, as a resurfacing aspect of the revised Guidelines, effectively uncovers Japan's preoccupation with keeping the U.S. from shifting its strategic attention elsewhere. More specifically, there are no changes with regards to increasing U.S. commitments and overall firmness, instead, it is Japan who undertakes a more proactive role along with expressed willingness to equalize contributions to peace and security (MOFA, 2015). This not only implies that Japan's "rediscovered" eagerness to engage in alliance matters, with the U.S. maintaining its relatively stable stance, is a sign of anxiety on the part of Japan, but it also points to the fact that the revision of Guidelines was, in all likelihood, driven by one-sided concerns about the increasing detrimental effects of free-rider reputation.

This also means that the increased institutionalization of the alliance ties is happening not as a response to domestic pressures, even if the recent polls do suggest that the perception of China as a threat is increasing in the minds of the public<sup>45</sup>. The driving force behind the revision of the Guidelines is the uneasiness about the chances of the U.S. withdrawal from an unfairly unbalanced security relationship, and the subsequent promise of transforming Japan's role within the alliance is a reflection of Japan's anxiety of being abandoned in its dealings with the escalating external threat. In other words, the evident granting of more autonomy for Japan does not translate into the increases in chances of the U.S. being abandoned by its ally; instead, it is largely perceived as a way to gradually eradicate the perpetually occurring label of an irresponsible "free-rider", who "doesn't have to do anything...[but] sit home and watch Sony television" (Donald Trump, *The National Interest*, 2015; the *Japan Times* 2017).

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<sup>44</sup> See Envall, H.D.P., and NG, K. (2015) 'The Okinawa "Effect" in US-Japan Alliance Politics'. *Asian Security*, 11 (3): 225-241.

<sup>45</sup> Hughes (2017) „Most strikingly, the debates in the Diet were accompanied by large-scale demonstrations in the streets of Tokyo and nationwide not seen since the struggles over revision and extension of the U.S.-Japan security treaty in 1960“

**Operationalization of the Guidelines: “putting meat on the bones”<sup>46</sup> or “business as usual”?**

*“If we cannot defend ourselves [in Central America] ...then we cannot expect to prevail elsewhere...[O]ur credibility will collapse and our alliances will crumble... If Central America were to fall, what would the consequences be for our position in Asia and Europe and for alliances such as NATO?...Which ally, which friend would trust us then?”  
(Ronald Reagan, New York Times, 28 April 1983)*

***Disagreements over terms***

Following the 2015 revision of the Guidelines for Defense Cooperation, the need to achieve tangible operationalization, especially in the gray-zone areas, has surfaced. The Japanese could no longer afford reassurances in words and joint communiqués only; the mere factual replacement of Bilateral Planning Mechanism with supposedly more rigorous and “seamless” Alliance Planning Mechanism, which would allow for an effective analysis and rapid joint responses to “gray zone” contingencies, was not deemed to be sufficient (Foreign Affairs, 2015). Here, it is important to highlight that, as CEIP (2013: 116) reports, Japanese decision makers and defense planners draw a distinction between direct high-end conflict and “gray zone” competition, characterized by increasing Chinese military presence and activities termed as being “short of war”. This is clearly illustrated in the Annual White Paper, Defense of Japan 2010, whereby the policymakers agree that “a full-scale invasion against Japan that will threaten its existence, such as a large-scale landing invasion, is unlikely to occur,” while also remaining cautious of increasingly “diverse, complex and intertwined” nature of security challenges in the region (MOD, 2010). On its part, the U.S. somewhat failed to recognize the importance of Japanese concerns over “gray area” coercion, focusing mostly on scenarios involving “high-end military conflict with China” (CEIP, 2013: 116)

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<sup>46</sup> MOD, 2016

### *Joint military operations*<sup>47</sup>

Apart from this technical disagreement over terms, the actual schemes for “greater interoperability between Japan’s Self Defense Forces and the U.S. military, especially in the areas of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, and maritime security”, embedded in the revised Guidelines (MOFA, 2015, Foreign Affairs, 2015), have been successfully devised as early as January and February 2014, in the form of bilateral amphibious military exercises. In particular, the “Iron Fist” exercises, an annual bilateral training taking place between Japanese Ground Defense Forces and the U.S. Marines, and entailing the dimension of simulated seizure of the disputed islands, act not only as a “confidence-building measure or an opportunity to increase interoperability”, but also as a signal of a “political will” and “military means” to retaliate in the face of potential Chinese aggression (East Asia Forum, July 3, 2014). Termed “monthlong war games”, these exercises took place for the last time in January, 2018, before the launching of Japan’s first full-scale Amphibious Rapid Deployment Brigade “as a part of a sweeping reorganization of its ground force” (The San Diego Union-Tribune, January 12, 2018, Defense News, March 28, 2018). The rhetoric surrounding these exercises is somewhat revealing too, with Collonel Fridrik Fridriksson, 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit commander, asserting that “Iron Fist” stands as nothing more than a genuine attempt at “trying to improve the Japanese amphibious capabilities...[and] showing that we’re an absolute ally, that we’re going to stand toe-to-toe and we’ll stand as partners. And that shouldn’t be perceived as anything threatening” (The San Diego Union-Tribune, January 12, 2018). However, Toshi Yoshihara, a senior fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, was more outspoken about “Iron Fist”, along with other regular joint trainings and demonstrations, being a part of a deliberate deterrence strategy “the goal [of which] is to increase the potential pain to Chinese operations to such an extent that the (People’s

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<sup>47</sup> It is important not to underscore the vigour in which internal coordination was developing ever since 1978. Even more so, internal coordination, as a “key institutional building block” (Guran, 2008: 131), was developing in a steady pace since 1978 as well. For instance, Guran stresses the importance of 1978-1981 period, which followed the formalisation of the US-Japan security ties in the Guidelines (1978), when “regular navy-to-navy meetings, scenario-based joint training, system acquisition, decisions for improved interoperability and changes in arrangements for access to classified information and technology” were taking place systematically/routinely.

Liberation Army) would be deterred from rolling the iron dice in the first place” (San Diego Union-Tribute, February 5, 2018). The culmination of this exercise has been widely perceived as cementing Washington’s alliance commitments to Japan while also operationally proving Japan’s reliability as an increasingly autonomous ally (ibid.).

Other notable examples of consequential military cooperation are constituted by operations Keen Sword<sup>48</sup> and Yaka Sakura. The former one has repeatedly demonstrated, according to Captain James McKinney<sup>49</sup>, confident ability and willingness to “use the maximum amount of resources available to respond... to contingencies”, while the latter has been perceived by both, military strategists and policymakers, as “key to building the bilateral relationships and capabilities”, recognizing authenticity of Japanese eagerness to invest in continuity of the US-Japan relationship (Colonel Charles A. Western, Chief of Staff, 3d MEB<sup>50</sup>), and overall “strengthening [of] Japan-U.S. ties...in this severe security environment” (Minister Onodera, MOD, January, 2018). 2018 MultiSail joint training activities also represent an opportunity to increase “interoperability between U.S. and Japanese forces...[through] improving fundamental skills such as tracking and defeating submarines, combatting other surface forces, [and] live fire training<sup>51</sup>. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that the commencement and regular execution of some of these operations can be traced back to early 2000s, meaning that it would be a crude exaggeration to suggest that the very existence of joint trainings is dependent upon assertive postures adopted by Japan’s neighbours. While there is an observable

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<sup>48</sup> Approximately, 11,000 U.S. military personnel took part in KS17 training activities, which included: “air and sea operations, integrated air and missile defense and ballistic missile defense in order to keep pace with the growing ballistic missile threat in the Indo-Asia-Pacific region” (US Forces, Japan, 2016) Available at: <http://www.usfj.mil/Media/Press-Releases/Article-View/Article/991856/keen-sword-2017/> ; also see MOD (2011: 281) presents a „voice of a participant“ in Keen Sword 11, Junichi Yoshimitsu, Captain, 306 Fighter Squadron, No. 6 Air Wing, who asserts that such bilateral trainings improve reliability and mutual understanding between the allies. Available at: [http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w\\_paper/pdf/2011/32Part3\\_Chapter2\\_Sec1.pdf](http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2011/32Part3_Chapter2_Sec1.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> Available at: <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/1004704/keen-sword-2017-bilateral-field-training-exercise-came-together/>

<sup>50</sup> Available at: <http://www.marines.mil/News/News-Display/Article/633991/3rd-marine-expeditionary-brigade-participated-in-exercise-yama-sakura/>

<sup>51</sup> Available at: [http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story\\_id=104613](http://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=104613)

expansion and intensification of these interactions, it cannot be solely attributable to the rising Chinese threat.

It is also worth noting, that the timing of the U.S.-Japan bilateral military engagement, implicitly aimed at countering Chinese assertiveness, tends to coincide with joint missile and air drills (in 2017), which are perceived as direct response to North Korean threat (The Japan Times, April 26, 2017). A senior Australian Strategic Policy Institute defense analyst, Malcolm Davis, suggests that North Korea's aggressiveness, if viewed in the context of developing Senkaku island dispute, can be seen as a breeding ground of unprecedented opportunity for Abe's administration to justify the loosening of constitutional constraints on the exercise of collective defense, and in doing so, forge closer "security bonds" with Washington (ibid.). To be more precise, Davis offers to approach Japanese eagerness to engage in possible North Korea contingencies from an angle of it being a carefully tailored strategy of costly signaling of strong loyalty and convergence of strategic regional interests, aimed at "taming" the Trump administration (ibid.). Accordingly, this strategy was accompanied by increased frequency in high-level dialogues between defense communities on the both sides of the Atlantic, routinized meetings followed by sometimes controversial deals aimed at expanding the scope of surveillance cooperation<sup>52</sup> (The Intercept, 2017). Taken together, these developments taken separately from the statements by the U.S. officials, in their own right, reveal increases in alliance collaborative activities. However, if one looks closely at the American rhetoric, it appears to suggest that Japan should be prepared to tackle security issues in its surrounding region autonomously, and the joint operations serve the purpose of enhancing this capacity, rather than signaling solidarity between the allies.

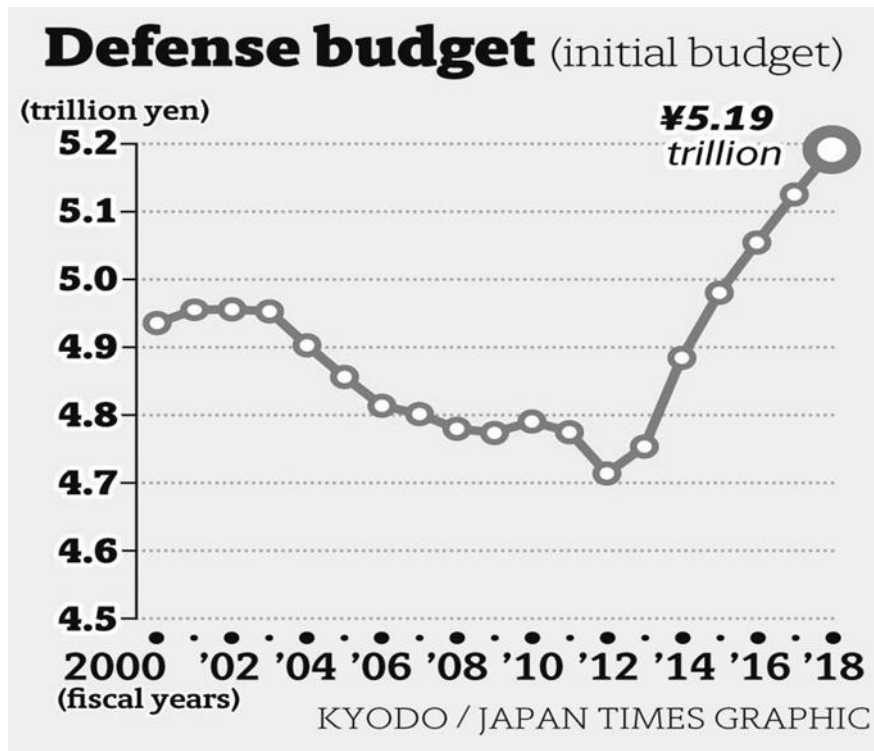
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<sup>52</sup> The Intercept (2017) presents information about Japan's close cooperation with NSA, whose operations extend far beyond benign "monitoring [of] the communications of nearby adversaries".

*Japan’s remilitarization: preemptive abandonment or burden-sharing?*

The revision of the U.S.-Japan Defense Cooperation Guidelines, credibility of the embedded statements of intent and recent joint military exercises cannot be decoupled from the efforts on the part of Japan to “normalize” militarily and share ‘the “spear” role of offensive capability with the U.S.’ (The Japan Times, May 9, 2017). In fact, as *Figure 1* illustrates, Japan has been increasing its defense budget consistently since 2012, with an observable curve up around 2010. This indicates that there is a direct link between the two Senkaku-dispute-related incidents involving China and the accumulation of military capabilities.

**Figure 1. Growth in Japan’s defense budget (2000-2018)**



Source: *The Japan Times*, 2018

The increases in defense spending is one of many representations of a considerable departure or a “grand strategic shift” from the “Yoshida Doctrine”<sup>53</sup>, which has dominated the strategic thinking and discourse of Japanese leaders during the postwar period, towards a more militarized “Abe Doctrine”, which is considered to be an

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inevitable response to international structural changes: “the rise of China and uncertainties over U.S. power and commitment” (Hughes, 2017b). More specifically, Samuels (2007: 144-146) discovers that adherents to the pragmatic and moderate security approach promoted by Yoshida tradition are losing their ground in the domestic political settings, in the meantime, Abe is exploiting the hollowness and flexibility of constraints on a “more expansive and radical exercise of collective self-defense and military power in response to external strategic pressures” (Hughes, 2017a: 99). Interestingly enough, according to Yoshida’s memoir, any development of autonomous military capability and subsequently acquired competency to defend itself was deemed to be a pre-condition for terminating the U.S.-Japan security treaty, which was perceived as a temporary measure, filling “the vacuum in Japan’s defense that would result from the withdrawal of the occupation army after the peace treaty” (Yoshida 1961; Terashima 2010). In the Secret Conversations Between Tokyo and Washington<sup>54</sup> (1956:160), Kiichi Miyazawa’s exchanges with Yoshida reveal the “diplomatic maneuver” praised by Kissinger as “the most farsighted and intelligent of any major nation in the postwar era” (*quoted in Teraoka, 2015: 72*):

*“It may sound devious, but let the Americans handle [our defense] until [rearmament]. It is indeed our Heaven-bestowed good fortune that the Constitution bans arms. If the Americans complain, the Constitution gives us a perfect justification”*

Despite this persistent denial of a right to exercise even a limited form of collective self-defense, Prime Minister Abe successfully pushed forward the Cabinet Decision of July 1, 2014, followed by considerable amount of supporting legislation passed in 2015. The shift away from security being a matter of close interpretation of 1947 Constitution, and more specifically, Article IX, has introduced “three new conditions”, which would constitute an adequate response to “fundamental transformation of the security environment surrounding Japan...[primarily a][s]hift in the global power balance”, allowing Japan to exercise force in response to situations where it does not necessarily find itself under direct attack:

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<sup>54</sup> Miyazawa, K. and Eldridge, R. (2007). Secret talks between Tokyo and Washington. Lanham: Lexington Books.

- i. “When an armed attack against Japan occurs or when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan’s survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people’s right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness;
- ii. When there is no other appropriate means to repel the attack and ensure Japan’s survival and protect its people;
- iii. Use of force should be limited to the minimum extent necessary” (MOFA, 2016).

The dominant rhetoric among the officials of Abe administration place the urgency of acquiring autonomous military capabilities in the context of Japan’s necessity to ensure its security through more burden-sharing with the U.S.. Nevertheless, there are voices, although largely marginalized, that call for autonomous capabilities not as a complementary alliance sustaining measure, but rather as a way to ensure independence and avoid implicit coercion emanating from other states (interviews conducted by Teraoka, 2015). If such voices become mainstream, the decreased dependence on the U.S., as a form of increased symmetry, might effectively be treated as a pre-condition of the eroding alliance. In the meantime, however, Hughes (2009: 294) not only suggests that such trajectory is highly unlikely, but also points out to the efforts on the part of Japanese policy makers to „manipulate the North Korean threat... to upgrade the U.S.-Japan alliance“ and „camouflage the fact“ that it is gradually entrapping the U.S. in an attempt to ensure that the „increasing and longer-term threat from China“ is kept under control.

Overall, the exhaustive Japanese efforts at developing a stronger military posture, which are still happening against the background of prevalent pacifism within the country, might partially explain a more cautious stance on the part of Washington in the Senkaku island contingency. While it does represent a legitimate effort to burden-share in response to continuous U.S. requests and accusations, it nevertheless means that with the increased military capacity comes increased assertiveness, which effectively feeds the unwanted entrapment anxieties among the American policymakers.



## **Chapter V. Summary and discussion**

On the whole, the in-depth context-dependent examination conducted throughout the case study stands as largely theoretical expectations- confirming case. More generally, it offers a few illuminating insights with regards to the conditions breeding security-dilemma- triggered alliance vulnerability. Importantly and on a par with expectations derived from realist scholarship, the study of allied interaction in the face of a salient crisis reveals that respective balance of abandonment-entrapment fears is initially dependent on the existence of an external agent, which carries a significant potential to be a disturbing factor in alliance solidarity, as witnessed by initial strategic inaction and vague statements issued throughout the course of Senkaku island dispute by the officials of the Obama administration. In a rather contrasting manner, the Trump administration, while issuing contradictory statements, has backed its commitments to the ally in the form of intensified operations “on the ground”. This is a clear example rhetoric being somewhat inconsistent with the policy trajectories illustrated by exact actions.

Relatedly, the centrality of the external threat to alliance enduring quality is further demonstrated by coordinated alliance responses to the provocations in the form of intensified joint military operations as well as changes generated in Japan’s security trajectory, as evidenced by increasing attempts to redefine constitutional constraints, triggered by increasingly pressing need to engage in more burden-sharing in order to preserve the reputation of a reliable ally in the eyes of the U.S. policymakers. First, this shows that the internal, or domestic, reconfigurations, along with the resulting foreign policy choices, carry a significant explanatory potential when it comes to assessing the severity of intra-alliance security dilemma. Second, it invites broader speculations if Japan and the U.S. still share a common vision and attach similar importance to enduring the endurance of their security ties. More specifically, the currently coordinated military activities, if examined with accompanying rhetoric on the both sides of the Atlantic, point to different directions: the U.S. perceiving military cooperation as a learning opportunity for Japan and its eventual embarking on an

autonomous path to solving contingencies it happens to be a party to, and Japanese policymakers and professionals perceiving the increasing institutionalization and routinization of practices as a sign of solidified adherence and dense collaboration in case a violent conflict breaks out.

Similarly, the increasing capacity of Japan to engage in burden-sharing through the abolition of constitutional constraints and increases in defense budget can be interpreted as a distancing and insurance strategy, even if not supported by the dominant rhetoric. In particular, if assessed against all of the direct dependence criteria as set out by Snyder, Japan is diminishing reliance on the ally across all dimensions, which could be perceived as a sign that the alliance is losing its intrinsic value of being a credible “security umbrella”. After all, the hesitation of the Obama administration in the face of an evolving crisis not only triggered abandonment anxieties, expected to be resolved by the revision of the Guidelines, but also most likely accorded the U.S. with a reputation for unreliability in the eyes of Japanese policymakers. Either way, the investigation has revealed that Japan was not awarded a broad scope of choices, given that the preservation of asymmetrical contribution to the alliance, contrary to Morrow’s (1991) expectations, would be detrimental to the immediate alliance durability, especially in the face of the bolder and more demanding Trump administration.

Second, the mitigation of Japanese abandonment fears driven by general ups and downs in the U.S.-China relationship against the background of rising tensions in East China Sea region, through the revision of the Guidelines for Defense Cooperation and repeated visits of Washington’s officials to Tokyo, signal that routinized interactions, and increasingly institutionalized and formalization of ties serve as a moderate basis for ensuring alliance durability. The positive results largely confirm Snyder’s theoretical expectations about the soothing force of increasing the explicitness of contract and obligations, especially if accompanied by operationalization of such promises.

Theoretically speaking, the entire investigation only further proves the necessity not to resort or rely too heavily on the theoretical expectations derived from a single school of thought, but instead merge different insights in an attempt to acquire more knowledge and establish clearer associations of driving forces behind the

phenomenon in question. Future theoretical inquiries into the subject matter will most likely benefit from comparative approaches, as well as a well-balanced analytical eclecticism approach. In the sphere of policymaking, such examinations are of crucial importance, given their capacity to uncover delicate tasks confronting diplomats and policymakers around the world, and highlighting the damages caused by failures to appreciate a fragile balance in the realm of security dilemma, and the subsequent lack of ability to exercise adequate security dilemma sensibility, which is carries detrimental forces into intra-alliance and inter-state relationships alike.

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